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Classic Trains

FALL 2022

THE GOLDEN YEARS OF RAILROADING

SUPER CONTINENTAL

Canadian National's premier train was always the bridesmaid

p. 16

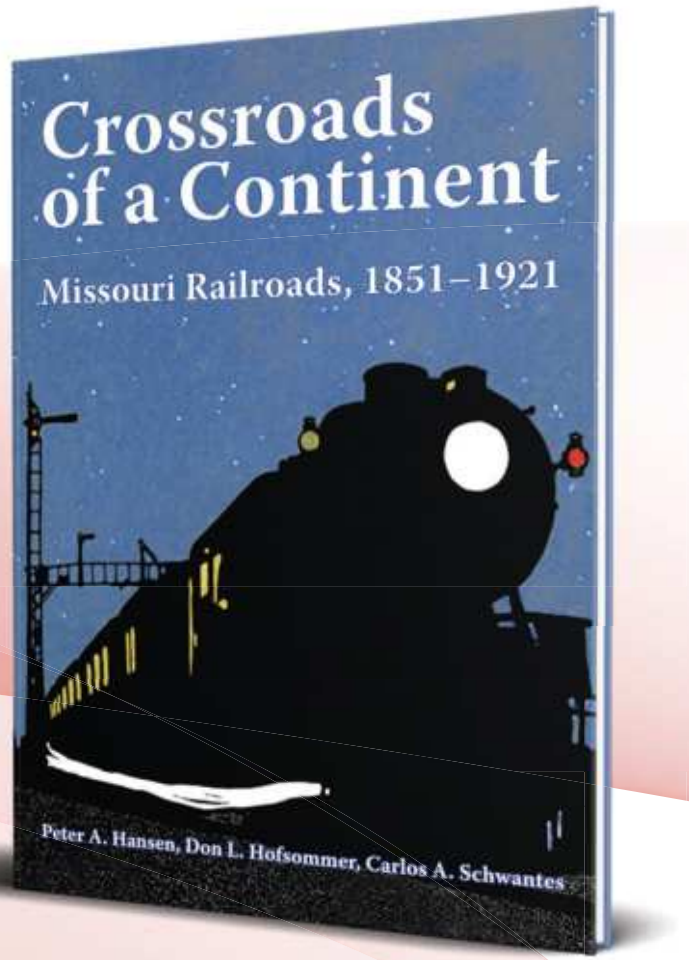
plus!

In color: Texas of the 1960s p. 42

Lehigh Valley towerman's busy tale p. 54

Colorful Arkansas short lines p. 62

DISCOVER THE HISTORY OF AMERICA'S RAILROADS

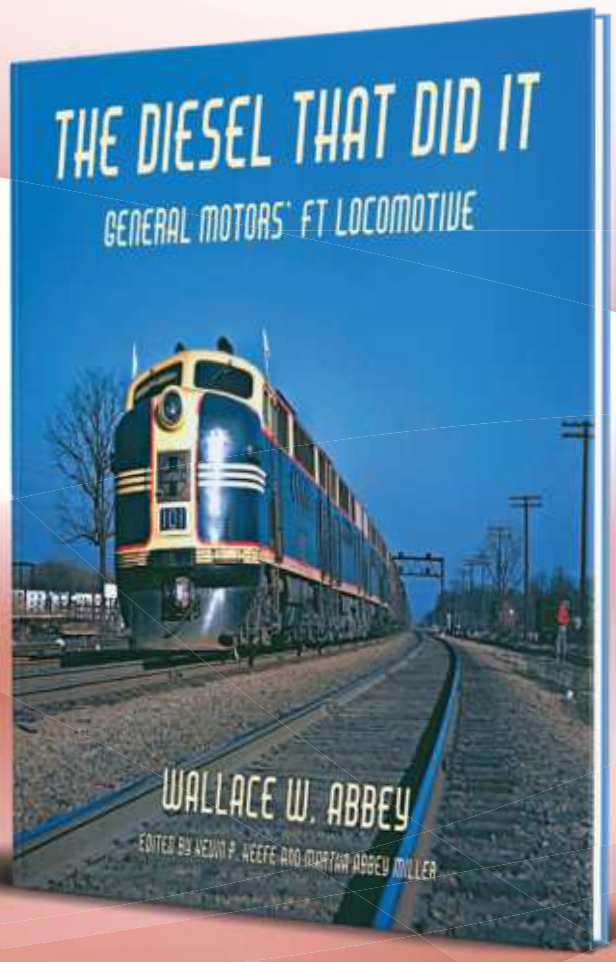


Crossroads of a Continent

Missouri Railroads, 1851–1921

Peter A. Hansen, Don L. Hofsommer, and Carlos A. Schwantes

Beautifully illustrated with over 100 color images of historical railway ephemera, *Crossroads of a Continent* is an engaging history of key American railroads and of Missouri's critical contribution to the American story.



The Diesel That Did It

General Motors' FT Locomotive

Wallace W. Abbey, Kevin P. Keefe, and Martha A. Miller

"Who but Abbey could spin this tale so well? After all, he grew up with the FT and alongside the Santa Fe and knew and understood both. So sit back and be seduced by Wally's relaxing narrative about a time long ago and a revolutionary locomotive long gone (but not forgotten)."
—Fred W. Frailey, author and longtime *Trains* magazine columnist

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Fall 2022 ▪ Volume 23 Number 3

ThisIssue

On our cover
CN *Super Continental* at Henry House, Alberta, near Jasper on Aug. 21, 1975. T. O. Repp

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Three cheers for underdogs

In railroading, there are often clear-cut winners and losers. Perhaps that's too harsh, but many of the beloved entities of the industry never climbed up as true competitors. Fairbanks-Morse? It went up against EMD and Alco, but never rose to the occasion. Chicago Great Western? It mimicked behemoth Chicago & North Western, but seemingly slower — and without prestigious passenger trains. We still love F-M and the "Great Weedy," as it was known, but Rocky Balboa they ain't.

And then there are the more even rivalries. Try to tell a Pennsy fan that the *Broadway Limited* was inferior to the New York Central's *20th Century Limited*. It's a great way to start a fight. Farther west, the Burlington, Milwaukee, and North Western competed, pretty evenly, for traffic between Chicago and the Twin Cities. In this market, the Great Western and Soo Line were the clear underdogs to railfans.

T. O. Repp [page 16] recalls Canadian National's headlining *Super Continential*. But, of course, it always played second fiddle in the minds of many to rival Canadian Pacific's *Canadian*. The *Canadian* was Budd-built stainless steel. The *Super* was not. The *Canadian* was the private-sector alternative. The *Super* was not. The *Canadian* continues as a named train to this day. The *Super* does not.

So, while you're sipping wine on a rebuilt stainless Budd car approaching Edmonton just remember: those are the rails of the *Super Continental* that you're riding. See, the route we know today as VIA Rail's *Canadian* is largely that of the old *Super Continental*. Perhaps, then, the *Super* did find a way to succeed over its more glamorous rival, and that makes it a true underdog here.

EDITOR

Chicago Great Western F3 112C is eastbound at Hillside, Ill., on Dec. 16, 1951. The beloved railroad is seen by many as an underdog in the industry. H. M. Stange, Krambles-Peterson Archive

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Assistant Design Director	**Lisa M. Schroeder**
Senior Editor	**Hal Miller**
Senior Production Editor	**Rene Schweitzer**
Editorial Assistant	**Monica Freitag**
Contributing Illustrator	**Rick Johnson**
Librarian	**Thomas E. Hoffmann**
Columnist	**Kevin P. Keefe**

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Director	**A. David Popp**
Executive Producer	**Kent Johnson**

Editorial
Phone: 262-796-8776
E-mail: editor@classictrainsmag.com
Fax: 262-798-6468
P.O. Box 1612
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Account Executive — **Tom Vorel**
630-248-2299
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A potpourri of railroad history, then and now

HeadEnd

WE MISS . . .
Passenger trains with their own style. Seaboard Air Line had three glass-topped Sun Lounge cars for the *Silver Meteor*. Jim Scribbins

"Other duties..."

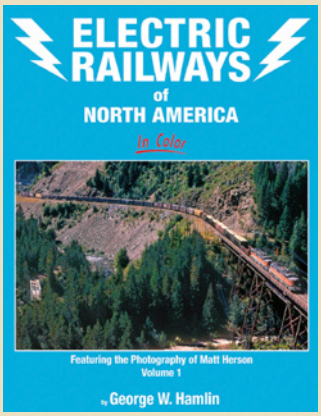
Anybody who's had a job in the past 20 years has likely seen the phrase "other duties as assigned" on a job description. The railroad equivalent of that must then be illustrated here: Santa Fe Alco PA No. 54, as famous a passenger locomotive as there can be, handling a lowly local freight at Lubbock, Texas, in December 1959. It may not be glamorous, but it pays the bills. John B. McCall

Pennsy T1 closer to reality

The Pennsylvania Railroad T1 Steam Locomotive Trust displayed its progress on No. 5550, whose backers hope to see it running by 2030. The Trust trucked the 30-ton boiler assembly 1,200 miles from its fabrication site in St. Louis to a Harrisburg, Pa., hotel where the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society held its annual convention in May.

Two photos, Dan Cupper

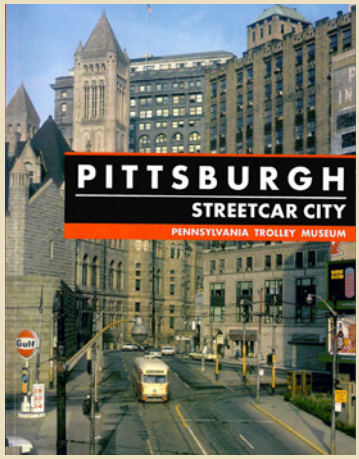
Reviews



Electric Railways of North America in Color, Vol. 1

By George W. Hamlin. Morning Sun Books, Avon-by-the-Sea, N.J. 128 pages, $69.95.

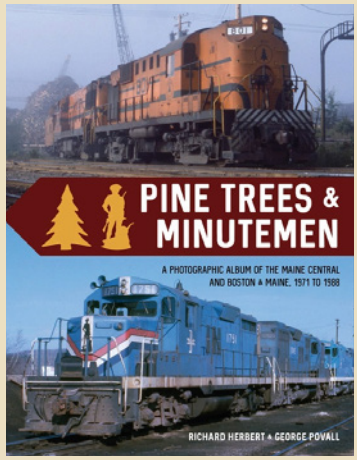
Electric railroads served a variety of purposes in North America: carrying commuters, industrial switching, and mainline freight and passenger service. From coal-hauling, six-axle, red, white and blue motors in British Columbia to plain green electric m.u. cars in New Jersey there can be broad interest in electric railroads. Noted railfan Matthew Herson loaned his photographic collection to create this 128-page volume. The book generally shows four photos per spread, a format that provides hundreds of color photos for the reader. However, it lacks any type of index or table of contents. The book opens with British Columbia Hydro and ends with Reading commuter operations. This volume is a nice addition for electric traction fans, covering a variety of freight and passenger operations. — *Brian M. Schmidt*



Pittsburgh: Streetcar City

Pennsylvania Trolley Museum, Washington, Pa. 188 pages. $29.95.

Pittsburgh's trolley system rose to fame as one of the last operations to use original PCC cars in the U.S. Beyond the equipment, however, Pittsburgh's system offered a smorgasbord of variety: incline elevators, operation on public streets and private rights-of-way, tunnels, bridges, urban grit, and pastoral rural scenes. The history starts in the late 19th century and runs through the modern day, although an emphasis in writing and photography is given to the post-World War II era. Sections include History, Riding, Routes, Employees, Operations, Inclines, and Future. An appendix includes an equipment roster and last days of service for each route. The volume is well illustrated and includes a separate packet of maps. This book should appeal to both fans of Pittsburgh's rail scene as well as the broader electric railway and urban transit scenes. — *B.M.S.*



Pine Trees & Minutemen

By Richard Herbert and George Povall. Garbely Publishing Co., Dingmans Ferry, Pa. 80 pages, $45.

The Boston & Maine and Maine Central railroads are often linked in the minds of railroad enthusiasts. So it is not surprising that this new volume examines both railroads together. The softcover book nominally covers the years 1971 to 1988, yet less than two dozen photos show the image of Guilford on locomotives. The book is arranged geographically, with a brief introduction by publisher Rudy Garbely on the two railroads. Photos are generally presented three or four to a spread. Some locations are repeated, such as four shots on the Hudson River bridge at Mechanicville, N.Y. The book presents a wide variety of paint schemes on locomotives, from Maine Central green-and-gold and Boston & Maine maroon-and-gold through Guilford. This book will please railfans looking for a photographic overview of New England's largest railroads. — *B.M.S.*

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Big win for Midwest steam

Minneapolis-based Railroading Heritage of Midwest America/The Friends of the 261 will expand operations into the former National Railway Equipment shop complex in the Quad Cities community of Silvis, Ill. The 90-acre facility was once the main shop of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. The organization has also secured the donation of 4-6-6-4 Challenger No. 3985, 2-10-2 No. 5511, DDA40X No. 6936, and other equipment from UP's Heritage Fleet. The group plans to restore both steam locomotives to operating condition. Also being donated are an unrestored former E9B locomotive, four coaches, a diner-lounge car, ex-Western Pacific business car Selma, former Southern Pacific business car Stanford, a baggage car, and a caboose. The equipment will be moved by UP to Silvis later this year. The Silvis facility has more than 10 miles of track; the main shop building is 400,000 square feet with multiple overhead cranes. It includes a wheel shop, warehouse space, locomotive wheel-drop table, and several other smaller shop buildings. The organization currently has no plans to permanently move No. 261 to the complex although it could be moved to Illinois to pull excursion trains on a temporary basis. A portion of the shop will be leased back to NRE over the next five years to help generate revenue and offset the cost of the acquisition. — *Steve Glischinski, photo by Erik Rasmussen*

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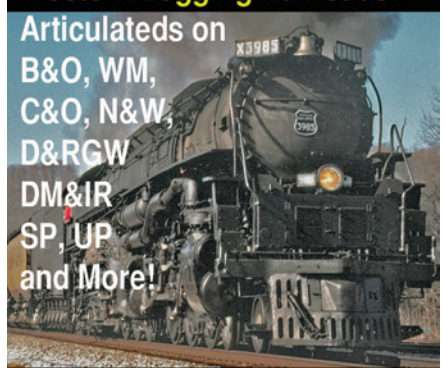

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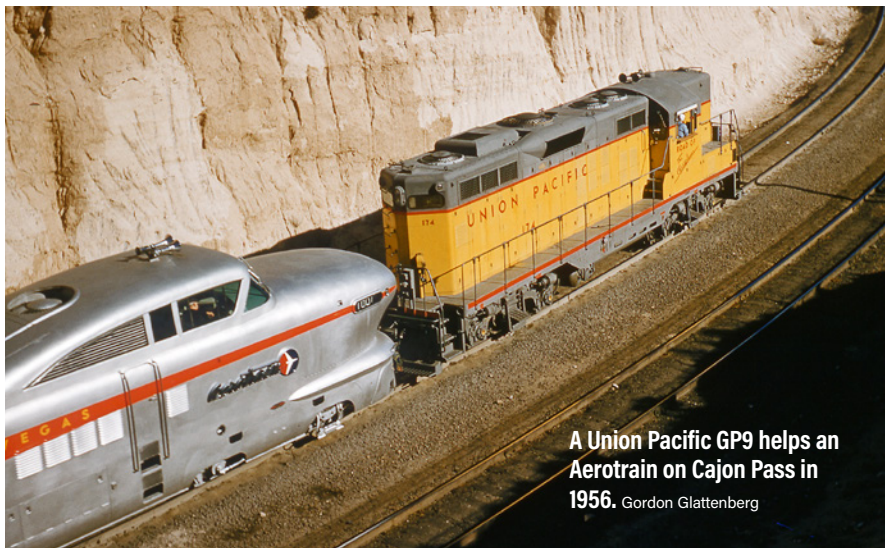


A Union Pacific GP9 helps an Aerotrain on Cajon Pass in 1956. Gordon Glattenberg

Aerotrain + GP9, exemplified

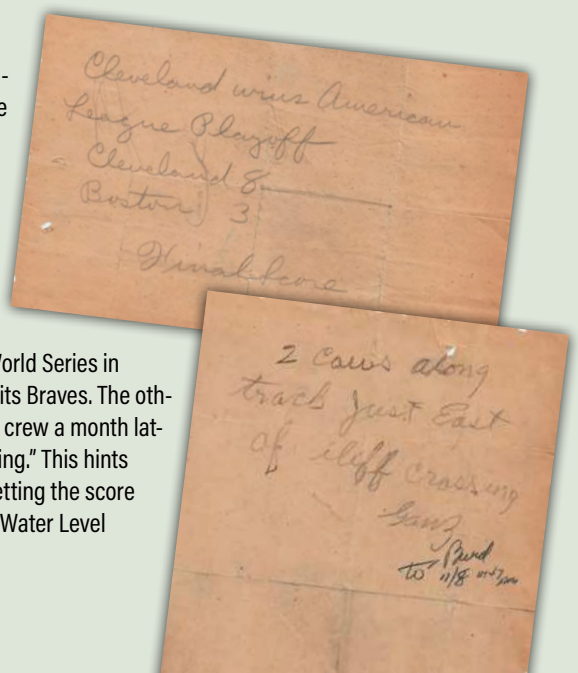
Brian Solomon's article on Aerotrains + GP9s reminded me of this picture. A GP9 is helping an Aerotrain running as UP's train 116, the eastbound *City of Las Vegas*, up Cajon Pass. In this Dec. 27, 1956, scene, the train is rounding the last curve into Summit. — *Gordon Glattenberg, Santa Clarita, Calif.*

On page 39 Brian Solomon closes with the question, "I wonder what convinced the leading builder of American cars and trucks to develop the Aerotrain in the first place?"

While he alludes to the answer by saying it was developed to "gin up public excitement and offer a new generation of low-cost streamlined passenger equipment," that was only a small part of the answer. The reason it was developed was New York Central's (and before that Chesapeake & Ohio's) Robert R. Young's idea about offering "new trains" that would make passenger service profitable and sustainable for the railroads. Young was quite the promoter and showman and combined with his flair for publicity, was influential. With ACF, Budd, Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton, and Fairbanks-Morse producing similar lightweight trains, GM wanted to be in the mix if there was the chance that Young could be correct in saying those trains could "save an industry."

GM dived right in as the development

Play ball!



Charles Geletzke's story about New York Central's baseball score form tickled me because it reminded me of a favorite in my own collection. Yellowed with age, and evidently a copy the operator kept for his records at Sparta Jct. on New York, Susquehanna and Western, it reported the final score of the Oct. 4 American League playoff game. Cleveland's win over the Red Sox gave it the pennant, sending the team to the 1948 World Series in which it prevailed over Boston's other team, its Braves. The other side of the note has a message warning a crew a month later: "2 cows along track Just East of iliff crossing." This hints how lonely an outpost was Sparta Jct. but getting the score was just as important there as it was on the Water Level Route. — *Jerry Dziedzic, Breckenridge, Colo*

of the train could be made fairly easily as it had all the components necessary for construction from the locomotive (and design) and passenger carbodies (GM buses). If there was a profit to be made, GM didn't want to be left out.

As it turned out, the supremacy of the automobile and its offer of convenience and affordability, plus the impending spread of highway development, already underway in several states, resulting from Eisenhower's interstate highway initiative, not to mention the poor riding characteristics of all those trains, doomed them. But, their descendants live on today in corridor services.

Geoff Doughty, Lyman, Maine

Fort Collins streetcars

Car 23 has been rebuilt by the Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Museum in Colorado Springs, lacking only some final electrical work to operate, and cars 21 and 25 still run in tourist service in Fort Collins on the remaining section of track west of downtown on Mountain on weekend and holiday afternoons. Some track remains visible east of College as well.

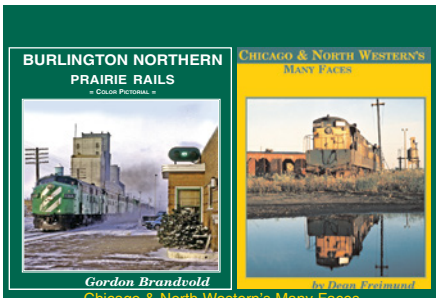
Jeff Hoover, Colorado Springs, Colo.

As I noted in my book "Main Street Revisited" (1996), Fort Collins was the hometown of Harper Goff, the genius who helped Walt Disney design Disneyland in the early 1950s. Goff fondly remembered the look of Fort Collins and incorporated a number of the town's design elements into Disney's wonderful Main Street USA, including the Victorian era buildings, a prominent railroad station at the end of the street, and the trolley traffic that converged on downtown. Of course, in Disneyland the trolley is a horse-drawn street car, but the effect is similar. The two vintage Fort Collins photos in the article nicely convey the small town atmosphere that Goff remembered so nostalgically.

Richard Francaviglia, Salem, Ore.

Model 40 uncovered

Our Walkersville Southern Model 40 No. 101 is stored operable in the Walkersville, Md., enginehouse in need of a little work. It last ran on the 2020 Santa Trains. Number 101 came to the railroad in 2001 from the Hagerstown Railway Museum and had been the regular power on excursion trains for many years. The 101 is my favorite locomotive



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Trains editor, David Morgan, so named the NP in 1985

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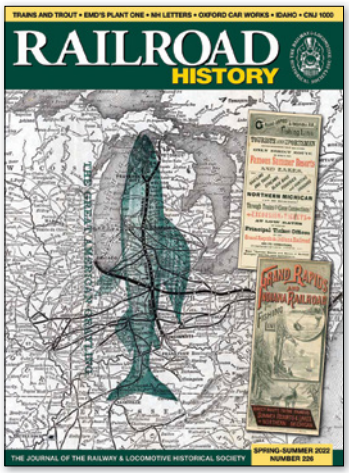

In the Spring-Summer 2022 issue of ***Railroad History***: Railroads and sport fishing; The rise and fall of Electro-Motive's La Grange facility; Winton/EMC/EMD chronology; Broken Hopes – A north-south railroad in Idaho; Oxford Co-operative Car Co.; CNJ box-cab diesel No. 1000; Letters from a New Haven railroader.

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Photograph by Richard Steinheimer

Walkersville Southern acquired Model 40 No. 101 in 2001 from a nearby museum. Note the standard EMD control stand. Two photos, John Meise

to operate. With its standard EMD control stand and configuration, up in the cab is like running a number of its larger EMD brethren from the 1940s.

There is quite a different ride, though, from its long-wheelbase, two axles on a rigid frame, platform. There are tight curves on the enginehouse leads and there is a lot of squealing going through them. The railroad has acquired additional locomotives since No. 101, but it remains my personal choice.

John Meise, Phoenix, Ariz.

Just read the article on the EMD Model 40 and found it quite interesting. I had never heard of these critters before and was surprised to read that No. 4 in the series labored at Cushing Stone in Amsterdam, N.Y., about a half-hour drive from my home. However, it is the Mohawk River that runs by the plant on an east-west axis. The Hudson, which runs north south, meets the Mohawk about 40 miles east near Albany, N.Y.

Phil Arony, Charlton, N.Y.

Cash for a GP60

Between mid-1976 and mid-1986, I was Kansas City Southern's assistant sales manager in our Houston office and my travelling territory included most everything between San Antonio

and the Rio Grande River. On my introductory trip to Laredo, the Texas-Mexican sales personnel bent over backward to offer me any help I'd need getting acquainted with the people in the various U.S. and Mexican customs brokers and accustomed to their business methods.

The priority, I was told, was to sell myself, then ask for their business.

President Andy Ramos was a Rotarian so I joined a Rotary Club in Houston in order to accompany him at Rotary on Wednesdays. Our friendship grew and one day the subject of locomotives came up and it was then Andy told me Tex-Mex always paid cash for its locomotives. It always bought new EMD, except for one secondhand unit that never ran right.

I was still calling on Laredo when the GP60s arrived. Their price tags were more than $2 million each and Andy simply wrote checks, drawn on the Laredo National Bank, and traded those pieces of paper for modern power necessary handle their ever-increasing business.

Gerald Hook, Russellville, Ark.

Just the facts, man

An error crept in on pgs 52-53 regarding the single GP35 order for the NKP. The wrecked GP30 was 907, not 507. Your roster on page 37 is correct

Bob Zoellner, Oak Island, N.C.

Summer 2022 was a great issue, but I noticed two mistakes in it. Page 81, top photo, the locomotive pictured is a Class O-8, not an O-7. All 22 O-7 2-8-2s were rebuilt into O-8 class during WWII.

Further, on page 85, Great Northern SD45 400 Hustle Muscle should be noted as the first production SD45 built. EMD built three SD45 demonstrators, 4351-4353, before GN 400.

Stuart Aaron, Boynton Beach, Fla.

Regarding the rare color photo of Rock Island TA No. 604 on page 27, the caption should read that Rock Island's model TA series was numbered 601 to 606.

Paul Schneble, Milwaukee, Wis.

Got a comment? Write us at Fast Mail, Classic Trains, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612; email: fastmail@classictrainsmag.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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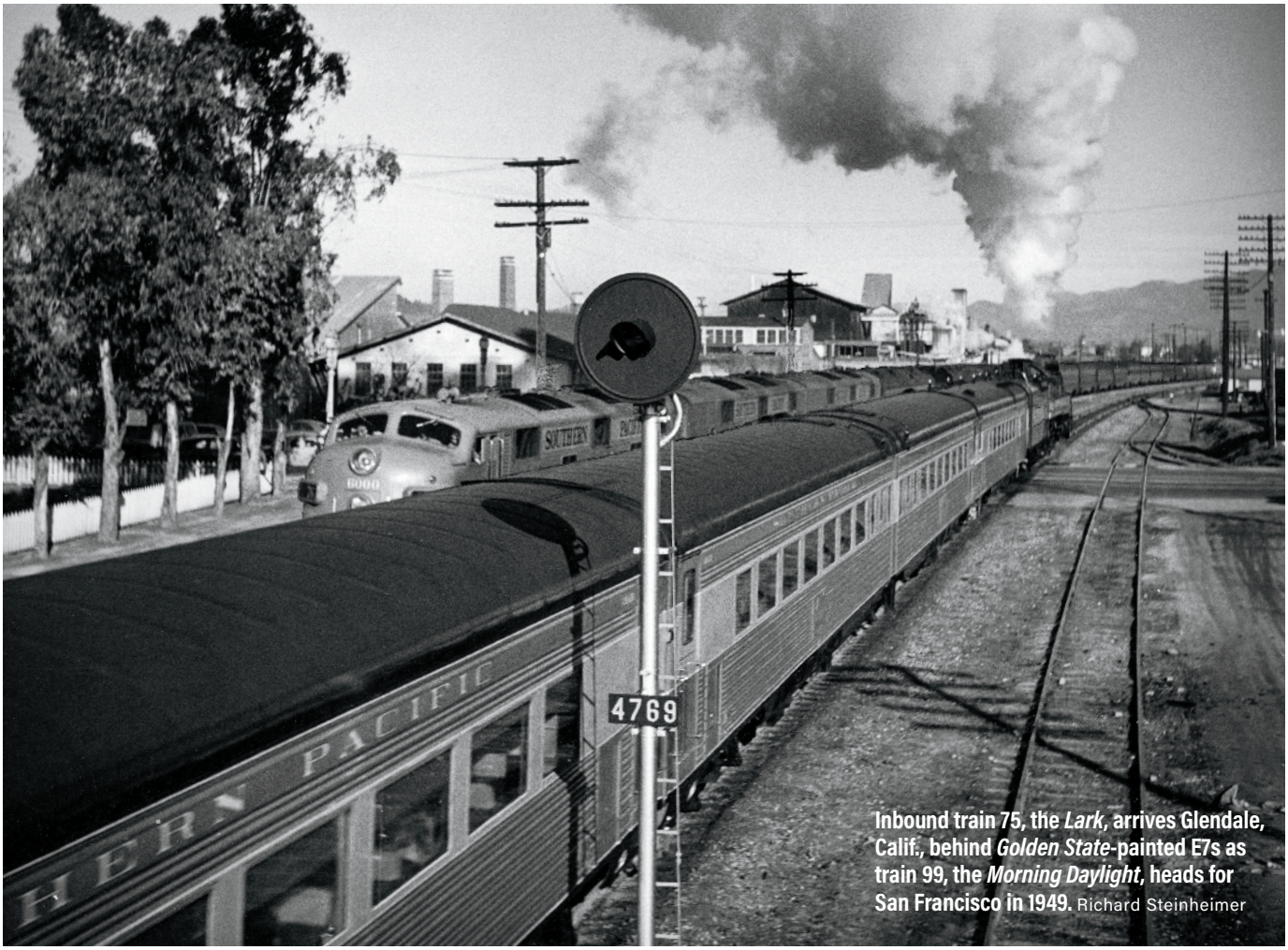
Over-under in ‘OKC’

April 1, 1970, finds the passage of Frisco’s westbound hotshot “QSF” as it departs Oklahoma City behind a typical priority freight consist: two SD45s sandwiching a cableless F unit. The train will operate to the West Coast over subsidiary Quanah, Acme & Pacific and Santa Fe. Here in “OKC” the train has changed crews. It’s passing under the Santa Fe’s “Texas Gulf” main line, and then will briefly join the Rock Island’s Memphis-Tucumcari route through Union Station before striking out into the Sooner State’s wide-open plains. The unsignaled territory will impose a 49 mph maximum speed, but the train’s crew will use every bit of it. Three photos, Paul Enenbach



Inbound train 75, the *Lark*, arrives Glendale, Calif., behind *Golden State*-painted E7s as train 99, the *Morning Daylight*, heads for San Francisco in 1949. Richard Steinheimer

For Steinheimer, it all started in Glendale

Western photo great's personal archives donated to CRP&A

The world of railroad photography has been buzzing recently since the announcement that most of the personal archives of famed photographer Richard Steinheimer have been acquired by the Center for Railroad Photography & Art.

This is one of those "big deals" that easily lives up to the term. Arguably the dean of American railroad photographers, Dick Steinheimer not only produced some of the most memorable images in all of mid- to late-20th-century railroading, he has also deeply influenced three generations of admirers.

Among the materials the Center has obtained are about 30,000 color slides along with thousands of black-and-white negatives, prints, and scans. Full disclosure: I'm a longtime member of the Center's board of directors. Appropriate here is a shout-out to photographer Shirley Burman, Stein's widow, for her inspiring cooperation during this transaction.

The Center's announcement prompted me to head for — where else? — Kalmbach Media's David P. Morgan Memorial Library, which for so long contained many of Stein's greatest pictures. Scores of them still reside deep in those files, mostly in drawers labeled Southern Pacific, Milwaukee Road, Union Pacific, and the other Western roads Stein knew so well.

I went looking for a theme and easily found one as I leafed through dozens of 8x10 prints. Some that caught my attention are among the earliest photographs Dick ever made, from a very important place in his life: Glendale, the Los Angeles suburb that served as his original California hometown.

Sifting through Dick's prints, it occurred to me that pretty much all the legendary photographers of the 1950s and '60s cut their teeth down at their hometown station. For Philip R. Hastings, it was the Boston & Maine of his native Bradford, Vt. The great Jim Shaughnessy practically lived as a young man at Union Station in Troy, N.Y. Down in Mississippi, a teenage J. Parker Lamb brought his hometown of Meridian to life.

The same thing is true for Steinheimer and Glendale.

Steinheimer was actually a Chicago native, born in 1929 to a family that suffered greatly in the Depression. He migrated with his mother and his sister to Glendale in the 1930s. The family lived

in a house not far from the Southern Pacific main line, which headed north from L.A. through Glendale toward Burbank, where it would split to form the Coast Line to the west and the San Joaquin Valley line to the northeast. As if to cement the hometown association, Stein in the early 1950s had a stint as a photographer on the Glendale News-Press, still in business as a weekly newspaper.

As author and book designer Jeff Brouws wrote in the deluxe Steinheimer compendium "A Passion for Trains" (W. W. Norton, 2004), the trains of Glendale were pivotal forces in the young photographer's life.

"Every time a whistle approached, Dick was out the door, running trackside to catch a glimpse of cab-forwards or 2-10-2s beyond the backyard fence," wrote Brouws. "Trains ran through his dreams. Living so close to the tracks became a habit: over the next 20 years, Steinheimer lived in five apartments or homes that abutted the busy Southern Pacific main lines of California, their close presence providing solace and continuity throughout his life."

It's easy to see why Glendale was such a magical presence. For most SP trains serving L.A., it was the first station stop heading north and the last coming into the city. When Steinheimer grew up during World War II, the city was a center of light industry and teemed with trains. Premier varnish such as the *Daylights*, the *Lark*, and the *Owl* stopped at Glendale, as well as a lot of lesser locals, along with a steady procession of freight trains.

Glendale was also a place to fall in love with locomotives. In the steam-to-diesel transition era, you never knew what might show up, from streamlined *Daylight* 4-8-4s to AC cab-forward 4-8-8-2s to four-motor diesels headed for the Coast Line and six-motor units grinding toward Tehachapi and the San Joaquin Valley.

Although framed by a relatively inexperienced 20-year-old, his Glendale photographs already show the compositional maturity that would set him apart from other photographers. It helped that Dick was oblivious to creature comforts and risk. He'd climb anything for a better photo, go out at any hour if opportunity beckoned, defy the weather if necessary, and he knew how to build trust with railroaders.

It will be a while before the Center's top-shelf archiving staff can begin to make its Steinheimer collection available to the public, as the organization makes clear on its website, railphoto-art.org. There is research to be done, cataloguing to be completed, and uncountable hours of scanning and processing. But oh, the rewards to come!

In the Introduction to his 2004 book, Brouws put Richard Steinheimer in context: "Unlike most celebrities in American life that fall victim to the 'shooting-star' syndrome — which sends stars up and then spits them out once they pass their zenith — Steinheimer has never disappointed or faded away. He maintains a humility, graciousness, and integrity that transcend fashion: he's the real deal."

And it all started more than 70 years ago on the sunny platforms at Glendale.

KEVIN P. KEEFE joined the Trains *staff in 1987, became editor in 1992, and retired in 2016 as Kalmbach Publishing Co.'s vice president, editorial. His weekly blog "Mileposts" is at Trains.com.*

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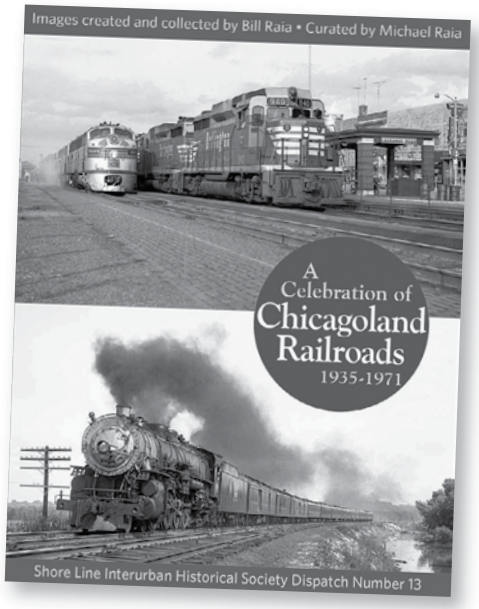

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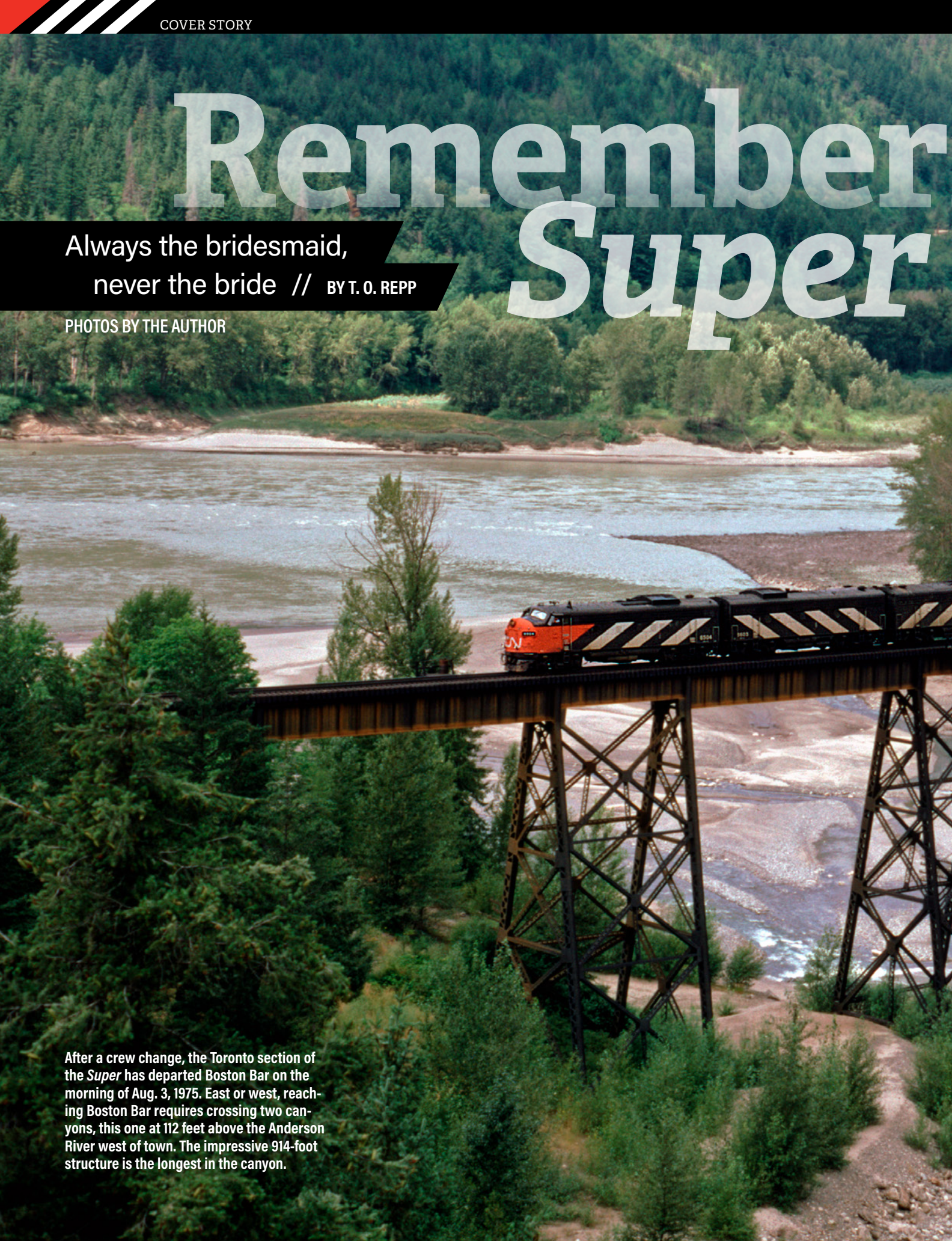
Remember *Super*

Always the bridesmaid, never the bride // BY T. O. REPP

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



After a crew change, the Toronto section of the *Super* has departed Boston Bar on the morning of Aug. 3, 1975. East or west, reaching Boston Bar requires crossing two canyons, this one at 112 feet above the Anderson River west of town. The impressive 914-foot structure is the longest in the canyon.

ing CN's Continental

Coffee thermos at the ready, cigarette in hand, lunchbox on the deadman's pedal, CN engineer Vreeland keeps a steady eye on the tracks ahead.

I am standing in the cab of Canadian National FP9 No. 6505 leading the eastbound *Super Continental* on, of all days, a very patriotic July 4, 1976. We're following the graceful curves of the North Thompson River north and east of Kamloops, B.C. It's a ride I'd been planning for nearly a year, taking advantage of CN's relatively low-key approach to such pursuits, not to mention the largesse of crews based out of nearby Kamloops.

Today's version of the *Super* is a classic: 21 passenger cars led by a quartet of FP9s in CN's inimitable black, red, and white paint scheme. The roar of all those F units seems to underscore the crew's eagerness to get to the maximum 65 mph as quickly as possible. In less than two years, the train behind us will be conveyed to the new corporation VIA Rail Canada. But on this particular Sunday, the *Super* is pure CN.

We had just got underway from the flag stop at Clearwater, a small town on the North Thompson River, when we stopped again — for a cat, carrying her kittens across the tracks. And if you know cats, she was taking her damned sweet time about it, unperturbed by the impatient rumble of 7,000 hp worth of passenger diesels suddenly brought to a halt.

This, in a nutshell, was Canadian railroading. Big six-axle MLWs. Wooden boxcars carrying grain. The grandest scenery on earth. A train worthy of the Dominion's vast geography. And a crew so respectful in that Canadian way, even of a cat and her kittens. Perhaps Trains Editor David P. Morgan said it best: "We train watchers have a great emotional investment in Canadian trains."

The author's ticket for the trip from Blue River to Red Pass, 88 miles. Reserved seat coach $7 Blue Fare, signed by Vice President Marketing Garth Campbell.

T. O. Repp collection

A GRAND TRAIN

I saw my first *Super Continental* in Vancouver on a family vacation in 1967. On our way home, my brother and I decided to ride Great Northern's *Internation-*

The *Super Continental* cruises along the North Thompson just north of Birch Island on July 4, 1976. Just look: four F9s with 21 cars!

al from CN's Vancouver station to Seattle, where our parents would meet us. After purchasing our tickets, we walked outside where CN train 3, the Toronto section of the *Super Continental*, had just arrived. As we continued down the platform, we spotted an eastbound consist being towed through the wash racks with a leased ex-Chessie dome-sleeper on the rear.

After reading Pierre Berton's "The Impossible Railway" about how Canadian Pacific carved its way into British Columbia, I took my very first paid vacation there in 1973. I followed the *Super Continental* from Vancouver up the Fraser and Thompson canyons before heading east of Kamloops along the CP to Banff. Compared to modest-size *Canadians*, CN's *Super Continentals* were 20-plus car monsters running in two sections, affording photographs in daylight most anywhere along its route. We Americans were still adjusting to Amtrak; experiencing these Canadian trains was like turning the clock back 20 years.

After I moved to the Seattle area, the Fraser-Thompson canyons were seduc-

Just south of Blue River, our train negotiates Port D'Enfer, or Little Hells Gate Canyon, where trains used to stop to allow passengers to view the scenery. Due to a derailment near Messiter, so too did we for a time, allowing me to climb down for a few snapshots.

CN Super Continental

tively close at hand, especially on holiday weekends. In addition to railfan road trips, I rode every passenger train in B.C., though none as often as the four times I rode the *Super Continental*, plus two memorable cab rides. How grand is that?

While CP's *Canadian* drew raves, it was the more utilitarian *Super Continental* that carried the most passengers. The New Image design scheme made CN's interiors far more inviting than CP's, which seemed stuck in the 1950s, patched upholstery and all. In the ensuing years, I watched the *Super Continental* get absorbed into the VIA system, then disappear altogether, only to reappear with a different name.

A BICENTENNIAL CAB RIDE

In August 1975, friend Steve Fuller and I were taking night shots of the *Super Continental* in Kamloops when its engineer, Dennis Dohm, invited us up into the cab. After pleasantries, he offered us to come along with him as far as Savona, 26 miles west at the far end of Kamloops Lake. Tempting as it was, we declined (thus avoiding who would ride the cab, and who would drive out to retrieve the other). But we did get an invitation to ride "any time."

I wrote Dennis the next summer and he made good on his promise to arrange a cab ride with one of his fellow Kamloops-based engineers. The invite was strictly informal; after all, this was the kinder, gentler 1970s in rural Canada. No need to get management involved.

With plans in place, I got up early the morning of July 4, 1976, to catch the eastbound *Super Continental* at Kamloops Junction. Engineer Vreeland and his fireman were most accommodating. I would ride the cab north over the 139-mile Clearwater Sub to Blue River, then continue aboard the train in coach to Red Pass Junction, where I would catch westbound No. 1 back to Kamloops a few hours later. Red Pass was not listed as a conditional stop in either direction; it was just the way CN ran trains back then.

We got underway on time, proceeding along the rolling farmlands of the North Thompson River. At Rayleigh, seven miles north, we took the siding for a westbound sulfur drag. We slowed down enough to avoid stopping before getting the red-over-green at the east switch. The four FP9s roared back to life, stretching our 21-car train up to the 65 mph maximum. Sitting high in a pug-nosed EMD F unit didn't feel that fast. We seemed to be just rolling along, unaware of how much tonnage was behind us.

After the aforementioned feline encounter at Clearwater, we rolled to a stop near Messiter, where crews were cleaning up a sulfur train derailment. Blue River was reached at 10:50 a.m., and I climbed down from our FP9, expressing thanks to the crew for my four-hour ride. My next task was to buy tickets for both east- and westbound trains, something I forgot to do in Kamloops. This took a lot longer than anticipated, but with tickets in hand, I boarded the train patiently waiting only for me.

At 12:35, our eastbound train made an unscheduled stop at Red Pass Junction, where I jumped off. I watched a few freights roll by before being picked up by the westbound *Super Continental* at 3 p.m. for my return to Kamloops. As a short-haul passenger, I got tickets in a regular coach rather than in the roomier, more comfortable Dayniter coach. The Sceneramic dome was open to all passengers (or was I trespassing?), and crews didn't seem to mind my taking advantage of the Dutch doors for a time. Next came dinner before we arrived back in Kamloops all too soon.

That was not my only cab ride on the *Continental*; three years later, I rode the train's locomotive again, this time from

Both passenger and freight versions of CN's auto carriers were spotted at Drummondville, Quebec, in 1993. Built in 1957 by Canadian Car & Foundry, each 56-foot, double-deck, double-ended-door car could accommodate six automobiles.

Kamloops west to Boston Bar in the Fraser River Canyon, returning on an empty sulfur drag. That was an adventure, too. I'll save that story for another time.

ROOTS IN THE 1920S

The *Super*'s predecessor was the *Continental Limited*, launched by the newly formed Canadian National on Dec. 3, 1920. The train featured a fleet of new electrically lit, all-steel cars, soon joined by open air "Mountain Observation Cars" between Jasper and Kamloops during the summer.

In 1923, the railway created the CN Radio Department, which broadcast programs from 11 radio stations along the right-of-way to lounge and parlor cars fitted with headphones. Locals could also listen, making CN's Radio Department the first to operate in North America. Anti-competitive complaints led to the removal of the radios in 1931 and the network's sale as a Crown corporation to the federal government. It's known today as Canadian Broadcasting Corp.

Until the 1940s, there were no navigable roads from British Columbia over the Canadian Rockies to eastern Canada. So isolated were B.C. motorists that they drove on the left (British) side of the road until 1923. Both the CN and CP thus had a near-monopoly providing services for freight, passengers, express, and telegraph. Passenger traffic provided a robust source of revenue for many years, but new roads began to erode that advantage.

While American railroads introduced fast, diesel-powered, streamlined trains after World War II, CN and CP were still operating steam-powered trains with aging heavyweight cars. In an effort to compete with the new highways, both CN and CP began planning on new streamlined trains that were faster and more competitive.

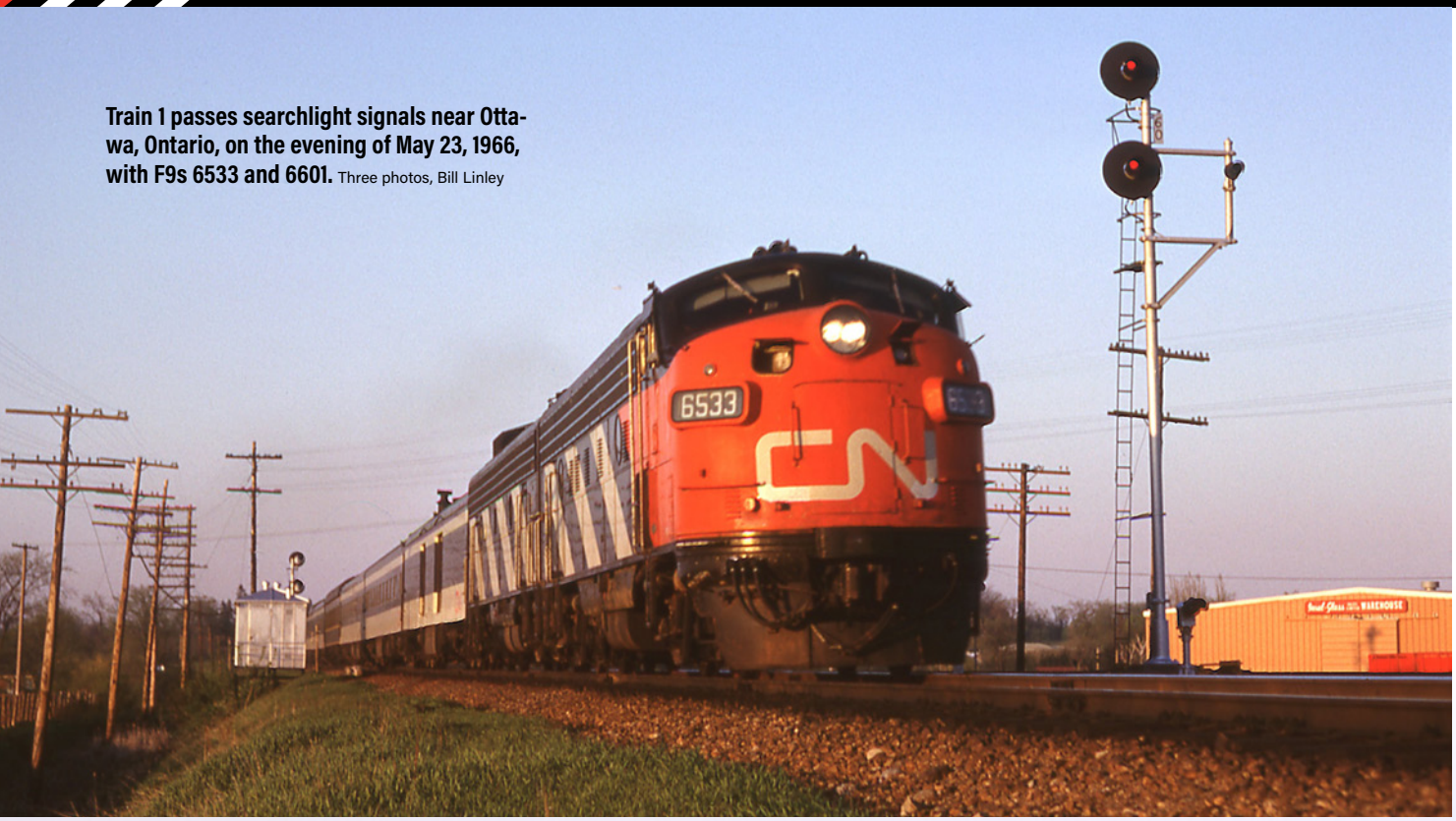
This travel-worn reality on the *Super Continental* Sceneramic car in the 1970s contrasts with the glossy brochure artwork of the period.

After World War II, CN began modernizing heavyweight cars and acquiring 75 streamlined cars (all with six-wheel trucks), but economics and manufacturing backlogs prevented them from acquiring enough new rolling stock or diesels to re-equip its trains.

Facing competition from CP, CN placed orders for a staggering 389 streamlined cars in 1953 at a cost of $60 million, the largest order ever placed in North America in a year. National Steel Car Co. and Canadian Car & Foundry supplied baggage cars and coaches while Chicago-based Pullman-Standard built sleeping cars, diners, lounges, and parlors (the latter operated Montreal-Ottawa). The new fleet got a color scheme of green and black with yellow stripes similar to CN's late 1940s freight F3s. Seven consists were earmarked for a new train named the *Super Continental* (same spelling in French, though pronounced differently) scheduled to be inaugurated in 1955.

CN instituted Car-Go-Rail service across the country in 1963. Cars were loaded at auto rental agencies in enclosed auto carriers, then forwarded to their destination in freight trains.

T. O. Repp collection



Train 1 passes searchlight signals near Ottawa, Ontario, on the evening of May 23, 1966, with F9s 6533 and 6601. Three photos, Bill Linley

Unlike the CP, CN decided against dome cars for the very reason many eastern U.S. roads did: they wouldn't fit. According to Stanley Dingle, CN's executive vice president of operations at the time, "… whereas CP's Windsor Station could accommodate them, we could not at the time put dome cars through Central Station because of their height."

Historically, Canadian National long-haul passengers only accounted for 60% of the transcontinental business, and 40% intercity (e.g., Winnipeg-Edmonton). With so many cars being added and removed en route, observation cars were deemed impractical. The train had more lounge space than the *Canadian*, and, based on ridership, passengers didn't seem to mind.

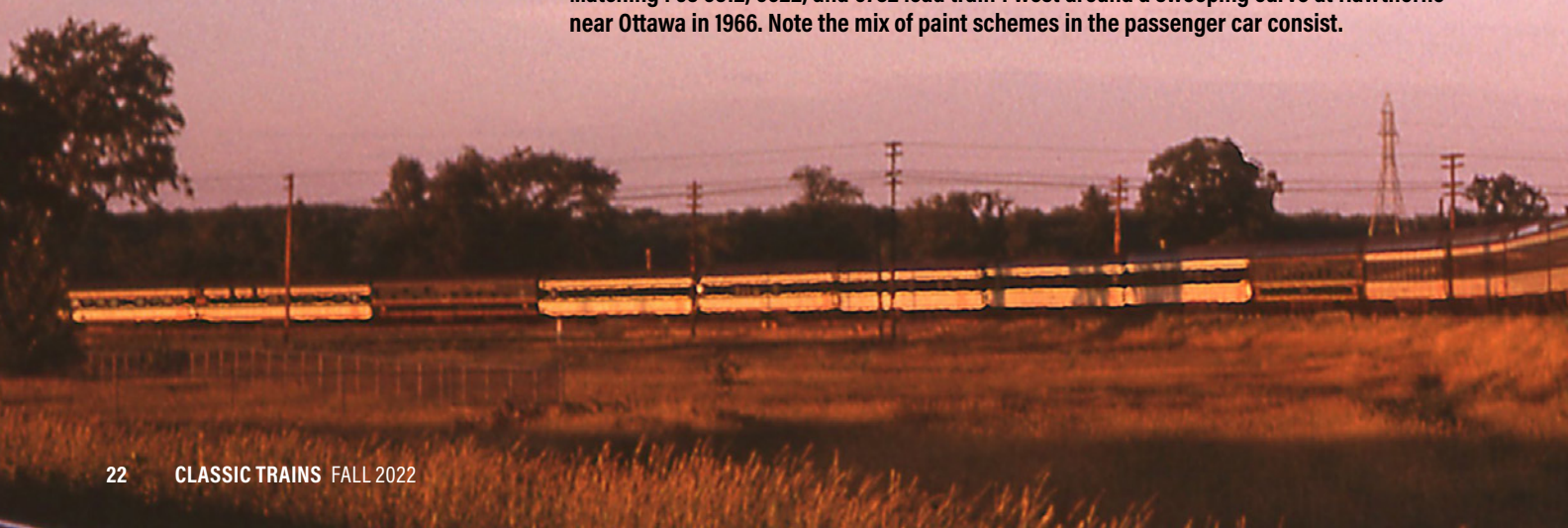
MOTIVE POWER CHOICES

To power the new trains, CN ordered 26 A-B diesel locomotive pairs: 14 from General Motors Division (FP9A-F9Bs) and six each from Canadian Locomotive Works (CPA/B 16-5 C-Liners) and Montreal Locomotive Works (FPA/B-2s). None had dynamic brakes.

Initially, all three models operated randomly on a continuous 17-day transcontinental cycle, considered the longest in the world at the time. After some experience (break-ins and breakdowns), operational cycles were shortened, with GMDs settling in the west, the MLWs in the east. The temperamental CLCs were banished from mainline runs altogether.

The day before its inauguration, three *Super Continental* trainsets were placed on display at Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. On April 24, 1955, the new train began service on the same day CP inaugurated its *Canadian*. By limiting times at terminals (but no increase in speeds), the new schedule cut 14 hours off the westbound schedule and 10 hours eastbound, reducing overnight travel from four nights to three. Though its route was only 43 miles longer than the CP, *Super Continental*'s schedule was three hours slower eastbound and two

Matching F9s 6512, 6622, and 6782 lead train 1 west around a sweeping curve at Hawthorne near Ottawa in 1966. Note the mix of paint schemes in the passenger car consist.



hours slower westbound than its domed, stainless-steel rival.

As the 1950s came to a close, CN was losing close to $20 million a year on passenger services. A request to terminate the *Super Continental* in 1961 was denied, the government citing the notion of "essential services."

To stem losses, the CN decided on a bold plan to modernize its equipment and operations. Industrial designer Allan Fleming fashioned the "wet noodle" CN logo along with a new black and off-white livery for its trains. Three prototype coaches were painted in the new scheme with a blue window band. The latter didn't wear well and was changed to black.

Train 2 with F9 6533 departs snow-covered Ottawa, Ontario, in February 1971 for Montreal.

INTERIOR UPDATES

On the inside, CN refreshed interiors with indirect lighting, bold colors, and improved seating at a cost of $10 million. A novel Red-White-Blue fare structure introduced in 1963 provided lower fares off-season and mid-week. (The "Red-White-Blue" slogan was inspired by a local drug store ad.)

Canadian National's New Image program seemed to be working. By the end of the 1960s, passenger-miles had doubled, but the surge put a squeeze on available equipment. Heavyweight cars continued to be modernized, and CN found a surplus of idled equipment stateside.

Sleepers were acquired almost everywhere, from the Boston & Maine, Florida East Coast, and Frisco. In 1964, CN acquired six Milwaukee Road Super Domes ("Sceneramic Cars") for its *Super Continental* and *Panorama*, along with six Skytop "Skyview" sleeper-observations for its Montreal-Halifax *Ocean*.

To handle the surge in tourists visiting the Expo '67 World's Fair in Montreal, three ex-*Chessie* dome-sleepers were leased from the Baltimore & Ohio.

The new image campaign and Expo '67 travel provided CN temporary surges in traffic, but by 1969 the train was losing $14 million a year. The National Transportation Act of 1967 provided CN and CP operating subsidies of 80% of operating costs, the other 20% borne by the railways. Both CN and CP applied unsuccessfully to discontinue their *Super Continental* and *Canadian* transcontinentals in 1969. The CN, however, was allowed to terminate its secondary *Panorama* the following January.

Passenger-train deficits and subsidies continued to grow and in 1976, the Canadian Transport Commission recommended that CN and CP develop a plan to consolidate passenger operations. Ottawa would provide full funding for the trains, but CN and CP would continue to manage them. CN rejected the proposal as unworkable and as Vice President of Passenger Marketing Garth Campbell recalled, "The only way we are going to beat Ottawa is to have the public on our side. . . Let's give this thing a new image." But it wasn't to be a simple as that.

And so "VIA CN" was created, the railroad's second attempt at rebranding. The first equipment to emerge in VIA livery were banana-yellow Turbo Trains in April 1976, followed by more sedate yellow-striped blue paint on conventional equipment. Plans to absorb CP operations within CN's new division were evident in VIA's first timetable, published in October, though CN-CP operations remained separate.

VIA COMES INTO ITS OWN

VIA Rail Canada became a separate CN-owned subsidiary in February 1977, though it would take another year before operational and labor agreements with CP were completed. On April 1, 1978, the federal government acquired CN's VIA

The eastbound *Super Continental* flows along with the North Thompson River near McClure, July 5, 1976.

Rail operations, creating a new Crown corporation charted to consolidate CN and CP passenger services. Acquisition of CP assets followed in October.

Under new management, VIA's *Super Continental* became a Montreal-Vancouver train, while the *Canadian* operated Toronto-Vancouver. During their leisurely four-hour crossover/layover in Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto sleepers were switched between the two trains, providing essentially the same service as before. (A few years later, eastern destinations switched, with the *Super Continental* terminating in Toronto, the *Canadian* in Montreal.)

No longer buried in corporate balance sheets, VIA subsidies became more political despite a substantial increase in ridership. Bending to political pressures, Minister of Transport Jean-Luc Pepin mandated a 40% reduction in VIA operations in 1981.

While most of the nine trains eliminated were in eastern Canada, the west was not spared: the *Super Continental* made its last runs on Nov. 15. The *Canadian* was switched to a longer Montreal-Toronto-Vancouver route and, to provide essential ("protected") services, a series of day trains operated west of Winnipeg to Saskatoon and Edmonton, where the newly minted *Skeena* continued on to Jasper and Prince Rupert. Twice-daily RDCs went to Calgary.

As a more western-friendly government came to power, VIA restored *Super Continental* service on May 31, 1985, but only as far east as Winnipeg, where connections were made with the *Canadian*. The *Super* was certainly not "Continental" anymore, its Sceneramic domes replaced with CP Skyline domes. Off-season tri-weekly service fared poorly, sometimes running as few as six cars.

Between 1981 and 1988, VIA per-passenger subsidies doubled, forcing CTC Minister Benoit Bouchard to reduce VIA operations by 55%. Despite protests, both the *Canadian* and *Super Continental* made their last runs on Jan. 14, 1990.

In what might be considered a compromise, the next day, a tri-weekly train began service over the *Super Continental*'s route to Toronto with a mostly *Canadian* consist. VIA chose to name it the *Canadian*, perhaps because it looked like one, but we weren't fooled.

While the *Super Continental* was never as celebrated as its fancy domed, stainless-steel rival, it carried far more passengers thanks to CN's innovative approach to comfort, fares, and convenience. May-

A tad off its 6 a.m. scheduled arrival in Kamloops, B.C., eastbound VIA CN No. 4 waits for a westbound train to pass at Kissick, 6 miles west of town. This version of CN's VIA locomotive scheme has a yellow pilot, obviously not weathering well. Subsequent repaints had black pilots.

be not "super" in the strictest sense, but you can still ride it today.

I still visit B.C., but encounters with VIA's *Canadian* are few and far between since it runs through the Fraser-Thompson canyons at night. Freight locomotives in the New Image livery harken to a time when privately owned passenger service might have made a comeback.

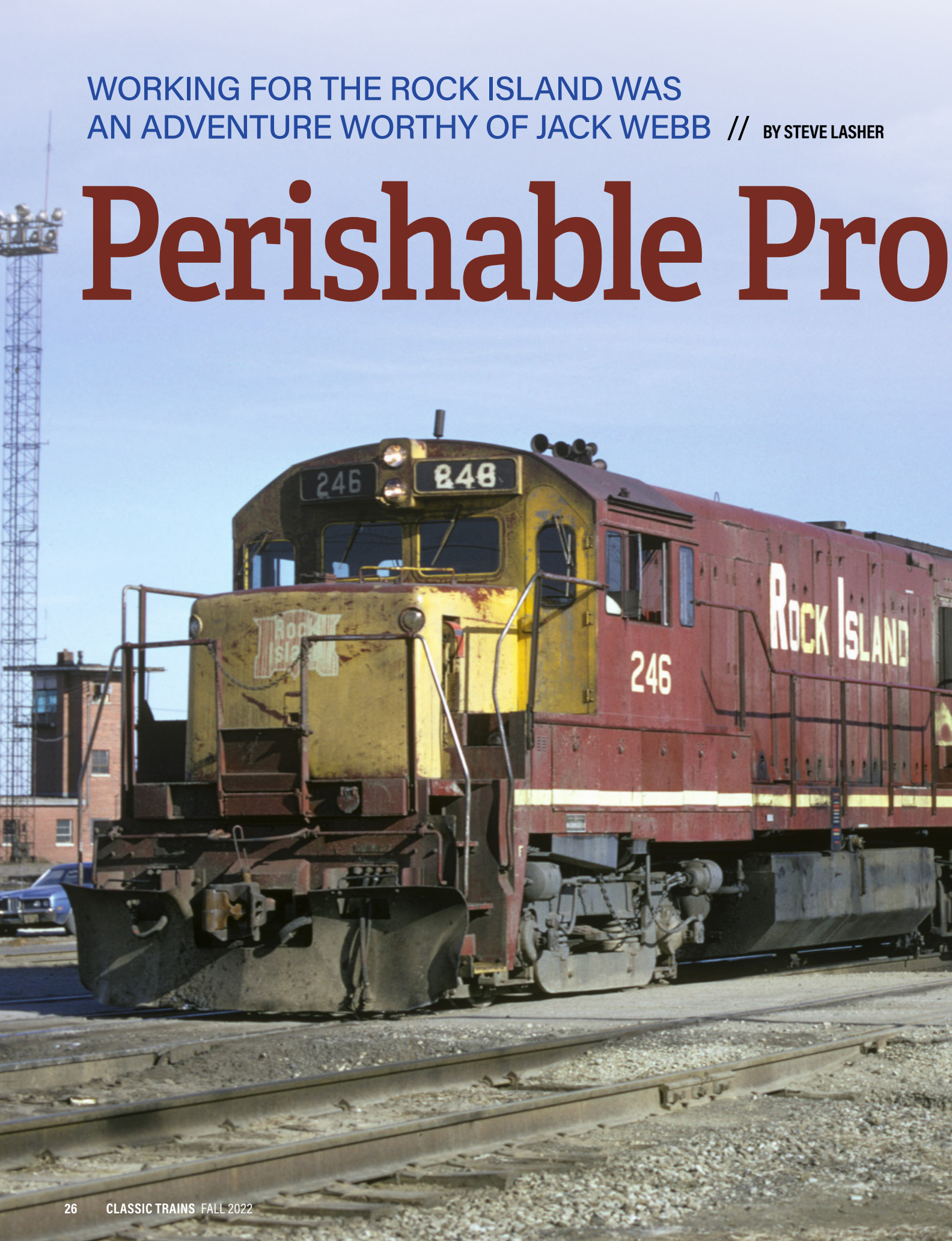
In retrospect, my encounters with the *Super Continental* were all too short, for the winds of change finally brought some measure of sanity to passenger train economics. Canadian railroading is less distinctive than it used to be, but once upon a time, I found a beautiful, magical place where transcontinental streamliners wound their way down impossibly steep canyons with no apparent urgency, as if frozen in time.

T. O. Repp is a retired Boeing engineer living near Gig Harbor, Wash. He is author of "Main Streets of the Northwest" and former editor of Northern Pacific Historical Society's Mainstreeter magazine.

A westbound *Super* threads through Skoonka Tunnels along the Thompson River in British Columbia on April 13, 1975. To navigate the steep, unstable cliffs, Canadian National built three tunnels and four rock sheds totaling 1,750 feet in a stretch of only 2,112 feet of track.

WORKING FOR THE ROCK ISLAND WAS AN ADVENTURE WORTHY OF JACK WEBB // BY STEVE LASHER

Perishable Pro



tective Service

One thing you learn quickly as a new railroad employee is that if you can hold a regular job, it's because nobody else wants it. In 1973 Rock Island stopped icing cars at Silvis. This coincided with Pacific Fruit Express's exit from the iced reefer business and represented the beginning of the end for shipping perishables by rail.

Several years before the Rock had removed every other track in the receiving yard and, since this left room for a road between each track for the carmen to drive down and bleed off the brakes on an inbound train quickly, it markedly sped up yard operations.

Rock Island U28B 246 leads a freight with a block of perishable traffic at the head end through Silvis, Ill., in April 1974. The three reefers ahead of the bulkhead flat appear to be ice-cooled 40-footers. Note the Union Pacific GP7B third in the consist.

Benard Almquist, David P. Oroszi collection

Thus began my sojourn in the world

About that time, they removed an additional track between what had been No. 1 track and No. 3 and paved a broad road between No. 1 receiving and what then became No. 2 receiving. This gave mobile icing equipment easy access to inbound reefers needing service but, with the cessation of iced reefer tariffs (and hence, the end of the business), radical change came to the way perishable business was handled. I shouldn't imply it had disappeared entirely; it's just that it now moved in mechanically refrigerated cars and, to a lesser extent, refrigerated trailers.

This reformation led to the abolition of some jobs and the bulletining of several new "Perishable Protective Service Inspector" (PPSI) jobs for clerks. Since nobody wanted one of the afternoon jobs — 3 to 11 p.m. — I became the successful bidder. Thus began my sojourn in the world of "piffees, spiffees, and youpiffees" (referring, of course, to PFE, SPFE, and UPFE reporting marks, the latter two referring to Southern Pacific and Union Pacific). The other outside inspector's job was bid-in by Ned Loetz. He had enough seniority to easily hold other jobs but the hours and days off suited his needs at the time. The inside inspector's position was taken by Gary Sager, who had also had considerable seniority but took the inside inspector's job for the same reasons as

Pacific Fruit Express acquired 1,000 R-40-20 reefers in 1945. The 40-foot steel cars had 4/4 Dreadnaught ends and featured improved (fiberglass) insulation and floor racks. Later paint schemes had both Southern Pacific and Union Pacific heralds. Union Pacific

Sliding plug doors began to replace swinging doors around 1950. PFE's 2,000 R-40-26 cars were built in 1951 and 1952. Ice reefers were also used in ventilator service, which saw the roof hatches opened to enable air to flow through the cars. J. David Ingles collection

of "piffees, spiffees, and youpiffees"

Ned. So it was, then, that "Nedly" and "Sagey Baby" became the principal players in this comedy.

SIX-RING SHANTY

Six-Ring Shanty was as advertised: about 20 feet square and covered on the outside with that fake brick embossed tarpaper once so popular. Inside it was pure railroad.

All it contained was a desk by the front corner windows for the inside inspector, a desk for the switch tender stationed there, a second desk for the outside inspectors, a small bathroom, a few lockers, and, for heat, an oil-burning "cabin" oil stove identical to the ones in cabooses. It was all on a plain concrete floor that once had been painted.

The walls had also been painted some unidentifiable color in the distant past but now had a uniform, thick coating of yellowed nicotine. It sat at the west end of the receiving yard where the inbound trains arrived and rear-end crews got off. The inbound waybills and list were given to the inside PPSI and the crew waited for a ride to the hump yard office.

The inside inspector went through the waybills and lists to identify cars needing the services of the PPSI department. Waybills for shipments moving under perishable tariffs could be quite complicated. Shippers specified what temperatures should be maintained, if ventilation or heater service was necessary, and parameters for this and a host of other conditions. (For additional detail, I recommend the comprehensive 1992 book "Pacific Fruit Express," by Robert J. Church, Bruce H. Jones, and Anthony W. Thompson.)

When he was done, Gary gave us a copy with perishable cars marked and what needed to be done to them. The lists and waybills then went to the yard office via pneumatic tube.

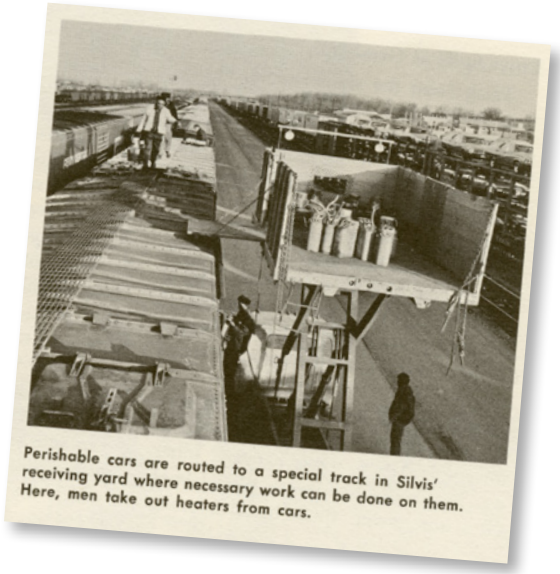
THE SILVIS SHUFFLE

Now seems to be a good time to say a few words about Kelly Yard. Its primary purpose was to classify eastbound traffic for connections in Chicago. Very few westbound trains were classified there. Number 93 (the "Piss Cutter") from Peoria and No. 61 to Cedar Rapids that usually originated at Silvis were about it, although local business from the Quad Cities could go in any direction and thus would add to the westbound flow.

On the other hand, every eastbound went over the hump. The cars were classified for eastern connections and, since most of the eastern carriers had cutoff times to make their eastward departures between midnight and 8 a.m. and to save on per diem, afternoons at Silvis could be a bit – well, let's just say chaotic.

Most of the eastbound perishable business arrived on three trains. The "02" was the biggest source, as it was the connection from Southern Pacific at Tucumcari, N.Mex., and could still, on occasion, run in two or even three sections (O2A, O2B, O2C, etc.). Number "44" was the connection from Union Pacific and could also operate in more than one section. The tail-end Charlie was 62 from Cedar Rapids, which could have a smattering of Iowa meat traffic and potatoes from the Northwest.

Usually, these arrived in the late morning or early afternoon. But if things weren't going well (which was most of the time), the later they arrived the more pressure existed to get them switched for eastbound departures. Which is why, most of the time, Ned and I were busy the first two-thirds, if not all, of the shift.



Perishable cars are routed to a special track in Silvis' receiving yard where necessary work can be done on them. Here, men take out heaters from cars.

Above: Mechanical reefers grew larger in the 1960s, as shown by Pacific Fruit Express No. 450611. The 57-foot, exterior-post car was built in 1963. J. David Ingles collection **Inset: An excerpt from a Rock Island brochure extolling the new mainline icing plant in the 1950s.** Classic Trains collection

As a result, there could be considerable pressure to get things done in a hurry on newly arrived eastbound trains. Since nothing could happen until the Perishable Protective Service released the train for humping, quite a few impatient official eyes could be on the "Outside" (i.e., Ned and I) PPSI clerks. So…

NEDLY AND I TO THE RESCUE

Our principal tools were three well-worn (read: battered) vehicles. All were painted in a shade close to reefer orange with red-and-white "Rock Island" heralds on the doors. One was a plain-Jane Chevy pick-up. Another was a small Ford tank truck for diesel fuel. Finally, we had a lift truck on its last legs.

Between the cab and the stake bed was a hydraulic lift. We used it to gain access to the roofs of old ice-type reefers to change heaters or adjust the vents (ice hatches to the un-initiated). Its platform had ramps on either side that could be let down so you could easily walk directly onto the car top.

If there was nothing pressing at the beginning of the shift, we would go over to the heater storage cars (five or so of the old General American meat reefers) where we would refuel (methyl alcohol) a supply of heaters and load them on the lift truck. The general idea was that Silvis was the point where heaters coming from the west (PFE, ART, Burlington Northern, Soo Line) were removed and replaced by heaters appropriate for their eastern connection (Grand Trunk Western, Merchants Despatch, Penn Central, Chessie System, or Erie-Lackawanna).

Ninety percent of these heaters were of the Preco type, meaning a large, round, 5-gallon fuel tank with a burner resembling a tomato juice can but larger on top. They also included an adjustable thermostat on the top of the tank along with a gauge for the fuel. Also mounted on the side of the tanks were two spring clips for anchoring the appliance to the floor.

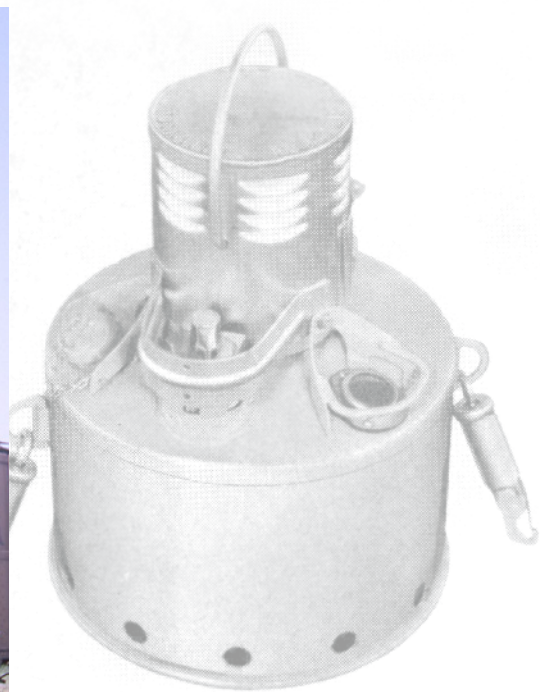
Fully fueled, they probably weighed 60 pounds or so and had a bail on top to carry them. We carried a sheet steel "paddle" that could be inserted into the side of the burner to extinguish it, and lit them with long handled "strike anywhere" matches.

Perhaps some examples would be the easiest way to give you the big picture. Let's start with "02A(date)" just arrived on "No. 1 receiving" from Kansas City and Tucumcari with, say, 82 cars, 67 of which are mechanical reefers and the remaining 15 are refrigerated trailers on flatcars.

Ned and I waited on Gary to finish with the waybills and give us a copy of the "list" (a printout of the train consist) so we can go to work. Since this will all be mechanical reefers (piffees, spiffees, and youpiffees) or trailers, we'd take the small tank truck. It's necessary in case any of cars are low on fuel.

The rule of thumb is that the reefers' gauges should show a minimum of half full and, if in doubt, fuel them. If we did have to add some, the amount was noted on the list to billed to the shipper later.

Usually, the carmen already had the train blue flagged by the time we came alongside to work from the caboose forward. We verified the car initials and number and checked a) the temperature reading on the car thermometer, b) noted that the refrigeration unit was working, c) saw that the thermostat was set to the temperature noted on the list and made



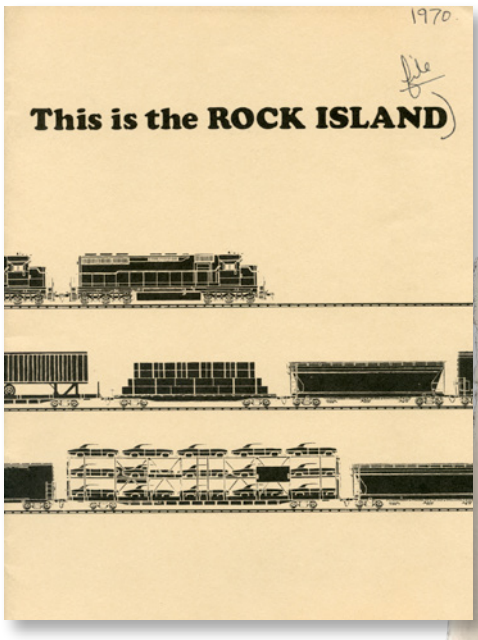
Above: Small heaters would keep loads from freezing in cold weather. Early models were charcoal-fueled and later ones ran on alcohol. Classic Trains collection **Left: A local ice contractor with a hoist truck tops off the bunkers of Santa Fe and ART reefers parked on a spur in Ohio in 1964.** J. David Ingles collection

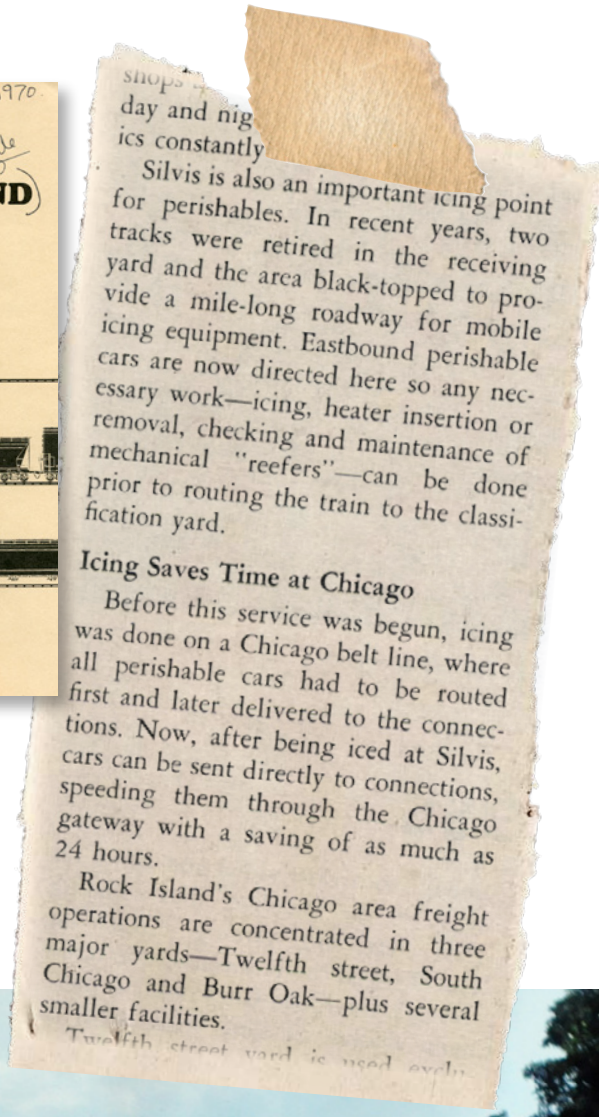
sure the thermometer was close to the specified temperature, and d) it had at least a half-tank of fuel.

If any were found not running, we tried to get them going. We always carried a couple cans of ether in case the recalcitrant engine needed a little help getting started. If we couldn't get it going, we'd call Gary on the radio and notify him of the car initial and number so he could tell the hump master and have the car sent to the RIP track.

Trailers were a horse of a different color. They seemed to be more troublesome than the cars and there was a bigger variety among them, even if they were the same manufacture. The fuel tanks might have filler spouts on both ends or only on one end.

It was one of these with gauges on one side only that taught me there was more than one way to build a flatcar. Ned and I had split up, so I was by myself. The trailer was by itself on a PFE flatcar. Although I wasn't happy about having to crawl under a trailer, I soon learned worse could be in store. It turns out that when I swung my leg over the center sill and expected it to land on something solid, there was





day and nig
ics constantly

Silvis is also an important icing point for perishables. In recent years, two tracks were retired in the receiving yard and the area black-topped to provide a mile-long roadway for mobile icing equipment. Eastbound perishable cars are now directed here so any necessary work—icing, heater insertion or removal, checking and maintenance of mechanical "reefers"—can be done prior to routing the train to the classification yard.

Icing Saves Time at Chicago

Before this service was begun, icing was done on a Chicago belt line, where all perishable cars had to be routed first and later delivered to the connections. Now, after being iced at Silvis, cars can be sent directly to connections, speeding them through the Chicago gateway with a saving of as much as 24 hours.

Rock Island's Chicago area freight operations are concentrated in three major yards—Twelfth street, South Chicago and Burr Oak—plus several smaller facilities.

A Rock Island freight service brochure explains the benefits of icing reefers at Silvis. The practice enabled faster interchange of traffic to Eastern connections compared with icing trains in Chicago. Classic Trains collection

A U33B-slug-U33B set in the Rock's late "bankruptcy blue" scheme has a block of reefers in tow at Bureau, Ill., in 1978. The lettering on the side of the slug dubs it "The Great American Energy Saver," a nod to the newfound energy conservation movement of the decade. Mark Llanuza

. . . nothing that entertains the old heads

nothing there! My leg went down all the way to my crotch and, in this semi-split position, it wasn't easy to get it back up. Painful it was. It turns out the center sill was hollow on these cars with only a bottom web down below. After that, I kept a close lookout for these cars!

Usually though, when we radioed Gary that we were done, within a few minutes the hump repeater signals would change to green and the former train would begin its slow journey up to the hump crest to dissolve into new parts for other consists headed for a variety of places.

HEATERS

Just because carriers no longer iced cars didn't mean that ice-bunker refrigerator cars disappeared overnight. They were still very useful for loads that needed heater or ventilator service. This would typically be lading that was fine within a wide temperature range. Potatoes were the loads most often moved this way and No. 44 (from UP at Council Bluffs) could have a lot of them.

We took the lift truck when we had heaters to work. The list told us where the car(s) was going and we'd pick appropriate heaters for the connecting roads. If there was more than one car, we would work up to three at a time by spotting the truck by the middle one and carrying the heaters across to the other two.

If we were going to work three cars and two were going to Penn Central and one to Erie-Lackawanna, we would load the appropriate heaters on the lift. Most of the time we only had to change one heater in the bunker at each end.

It was a process. We'd get the lift to match the car height and cross to the roof via the ramp. Ned, the smaller and more agile of us, would climb down into the bunker and, using his steel paddle, extinguish the heater's flame.

I would let down a rope with a steel hook and Ned, after unclipping the heater from the floor, would attach it to the bail. Then I'd pull the heater up and set it to the side. Then the process was reversed with a new one. Ned would clip it to the floor, light its burner, and ensure the thermostat was set to the proper temperature. And so it went.

Here, I must confess: Although I'm not terrified of heights, I'm not fond of them. I'll say this, it sure looks a lot farther to the ground standing on top of a car instead of looking up at one.

OH, THE JOKE'S ON. . . ME!

A word now to set the scene is in order. One of the local officials was a terminal trainmaster by the name of John Ahern (aka Big John). Now, Big John was several things. He was somewhat prone to mishaps, not to mention having a booming voice.

Once, when a car was on fire, he came to the hump office and grabbed a fire extinguisher. After he got back to the car and squeezed the handle the hose blew off and covered him in white fire retardant, making him look like a powdered-sugar covered gingerbread man.

But Big John's main claim to fame was that he appeared in (and appears in the screen credits) as a bumbling Marine Corps recruit in the 1957 movie "The Drill Instructor," directed by Jack Webb of TV's "Dragnet" fame. He was very convincing in the movie but I'm not sure it took much coaching, as actual recruits were used in the filming.

This fact was well known to all the locals but not so much to me. Now, you also need to realize there's nothing that entertains the old heads on the railroad as much as a good joke played on an unsuspecting "scizzorbill." I certainly fit that description and boy, was it a doozy.

Our pneumatic tube was subject (as was almost everything on the Rock) to occasional fits of misbehaving. On this evening, Big John had come down to wait on

Rock Island U28B 268 leads a GP40 and Union Pacific GE unit at Blue Island, Ill., in June 1974. A large block of reefers, including an ice-cooled car first out, rides at the head end of the train. Blue Island was the Rock's main freight facility in the Chicago area. Mark Llanuza

on the railroad as much as a good joke . . .

the waybills and paperwork off a scorching 44 so that he could take them up to the yard office without delay. A couple of hot eastbound departures were waiting on cars from this train, so he impatiently stomped around waiting for Gary to get done.

Now, during times pleasantly passed in conversation, Ned and Gary had heard and knew that I wasn't a particular fan of Jack Webb. I would mimic and mock his dry, monotone manner of speaking. "Just the facts, Ma'am" or "Well, we know one thing, don't we Ma'am…He won't do that again, will he." This was their trap that I was about to innocently stumble into.

Ned chimed in, "Say, did you see the movie that was on last night?"

"No, what was it?' I said, not realizing that I had just slipped the noose around my own neck.

"Yeah, it was 'The Drill Instructor' with Jack Webb."

"Really?" I said then launched into my routine, "Just the facts. We know one thing don't we Ma'am, he…"

Then came the explosion.

"Why, you couldn't carry Jack Webb's jock strap!" came a voice I'm sure was heard in all downtown Silvis, along with a few more minutes of dressing down.

After the ostracizing finally ended, Big John finally stomped out with the paperwork and left Six Ring. It's a good thing he did, too, because Gary and Ned were about to split trying to contain themselves. To say they were in tears would be a gross understatement.

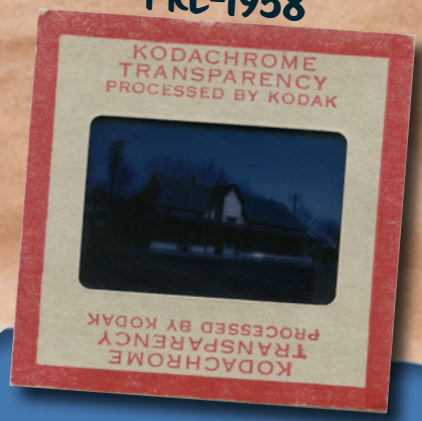
ALL GOOD THINGS MUST END

I eventually got bumped off the PPSI job and moved on to other things. I do owe Big John one thing. He told me once (in the days before touchy feely Human Resource departments) that he didn't think I was smart enough to pass a rules exam. Of course, this was an inspiration. (John, I missed one question out of 495 on the rules test. Thanks!). I do have fond memories of Ned and Gary and, of course, the piffees, spiffees, and youpiffees. ■

STEVE LASHER, who wrote about his late-1970s adventures on Rock Island and Burlington Northern in Winter 2013 and Spring 2017 Classic Trains and about the Cotton Belt in Fall 2021, grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, then moved to Kentucky, where he graduated from Murray State University in 1973. He took a Cotton Belt buyout in 1987 and moved to Louisville, where he retired as a registered nurse. He and wife, Bonnie, live close by in Indiana.

Fresh paint on the Bureau, Ill., depot brightens this view of an eastbound in 1976. This day's train has a mix of GE and EMD power with more reefers up front. Randy B. Olson, David P. Oroszi collection

A Pacific Fruit Express mechanical reefer rides first out behind four E units at Bureau, Ill. In the 1970s, as passenger service dwindled, the Rock shifted some of its E units to freight service, especially on weekends when Chicago commuter operations were lighter. Philip A. Weibler



SEND TO:

1100 EAST MA

BY DALE A. DEVENE JR. // Photos by the author

Did you ever mail your Kodak film to 1100 Main Cross St.? If so, you are already familiar with Findlay, Ohio. While not as well known among railfans in the 21st century, Findlay, like many other cities, has roots of railroad history much deeper than they appear today.

Before World War I, Findlay was home to six steam railroads, two interurbans, and a narrow-gauge quarry operation. The steam roads included the Big Four and Toledo & Ohio Central, later New York Central; Lake Erie & Western, later Nickel Plate Road; Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton, later Baltimore & Ohio; Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western; and Findlay Belt Line (operated by the Big Four). The interurbans were Toledo, Bowling Green & Southern and Toledo, Fostoria & Findlay. The quarry railroad was known as the Hancock Brick & Tile. Also in town: National Lime & Stone, which operated its own locomotive but on the FFW&W, not on its own railroad.

Findlay is also headquarters for a few consumer brands, including Cooper Tire, recently acquired by rival Goodyear, and Marathon Oil. It was also home to the Differential Steel Car Co., best known as Difco, manufacturer of specialty railcars.

Today, Findlay is down to just two operating railroads, CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern. A short section of the Hancock Brick & Tile line still exists, but buried in the trees on Findlay's south end and long out of service.

Dwindling traffic caused the Findlay, Fort Wayne & Western to close down in 1918; it was also determined redundant by the United States Railroad Administration, which controlled the railroads during World War I. The remaining .91 miles of the Findlay Belt Line and the Findlay Branch of the Big Four from Car-

FINDLAY, OHIO, WAS HOME TO KODAK'S PREMIER PROCESSING LAB, AND A MENAGERIE OF RAILROADS

IN CROSS ST.

ey to Findlay were cut back to Vanlue in 1931. The interurbans followed in '32.

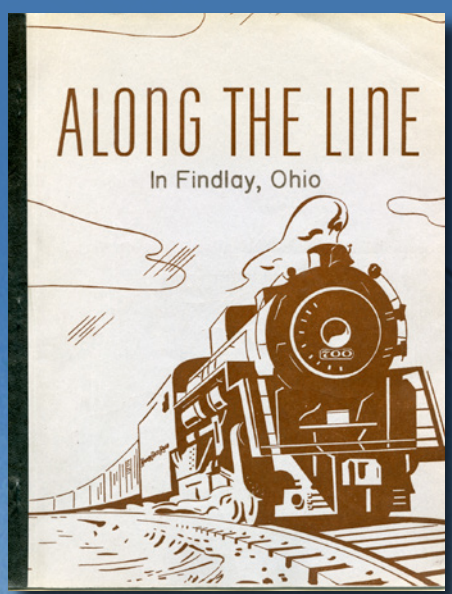
Bits and pieces of railroad survived for many years after the demise of their owners. After a failed attempt to remove the rails of the TBG&S from under Lima Avenue, the city left them in place and they remain there today. Difco's in-plant tracks were connected to the TBG&S and remained so until the demolition of the factory in the early 2000s.

Eastman Kodak Co. opened a processing lab in Findlay in the summer of 1955. My father started working there in April 1956 and would retire 30 years later. The Findlay lab processed Kodachrome and movie film. Ektachrome was not processed at first at Kodak, but the plant picked it up when it determined that independent labs were substandard.

I worked at Kodak for two summers in an area called the dry alley, taking film off the processing machines. It kept me on my toes, especially if I was trying to keep up with three Super 8 machines that ran at 250 to 300 feet per minute. Thankfully, the Kodachrome and Ektachrome machines ran at a much more leisurely pace: 60 to 80 feet per minute.

I saw of plenty Kodachrome railroad slides come in as the Findlay lab was the place to send your film if you were a train enthusiast. I'm sure many Classic Trains readers had their slides processed at Findlay, and many have been reproduced in Kalmbach magazines.

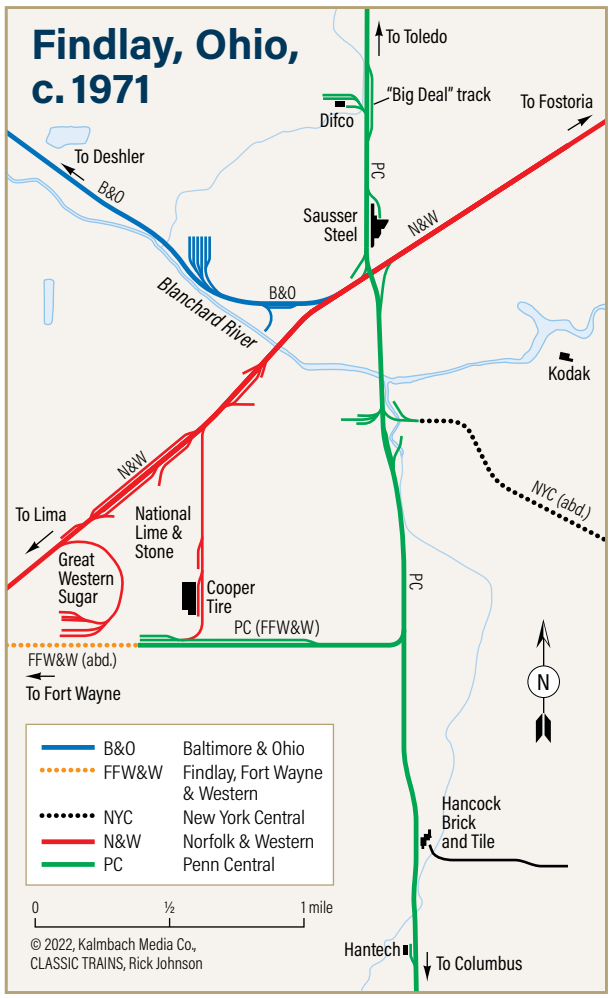
My father was on the hunt for the last of steam in the late 1950s. I was in tow, and this really honed my love of trains, even if I don't remember steam as a youngster. Nickel Plate Berkshires are still my favorite steam engine.

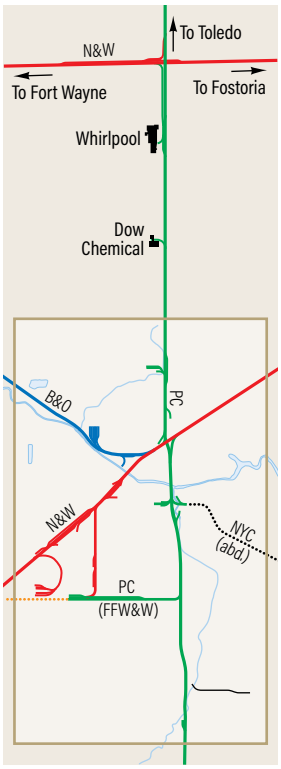


Above: A Nickel Plate brochure extolling the virtues of Findlay for industry location. Classic Trains collection **Below: The Kodak lab at 1100 East Main Cross in Findlay is shown in January 1957; it opened in mid-1955.** Dale A. DeVene Sr.

The Baldwin "Sharks" were a favorites of my father and myself. The train is about to crest the hill coming out of Findlay crossing over County Road 99 north of Dow Chemical. Those big De La Vergne prime movers always put on a good sound show! Three photos, Dale DeVene Sr.

The General made a tour on the New York Central in Findlay during the centennial celebration of the "Great Locomotive Chase" that occurred during the Civil War. She is running past the Findlay's New York Central depot located next to Sandusky Street near downtown Findlay.





The B&O's Findlay branch train ambles along north of town in March 1960.

HOME SWEET HOME

In April 1960, my parents bought a home at the east end of 18th Street in the north end of Findlay. It was about 300 feet west of the New York Central Western Branch. It certainly heightened my love of trains! I watched NYC power run up and down the hill next to the house.

Passenger service ceased in 1952, but one night we saw a rather lengthy NYC passenger train head south through town on an obvious detour move. I was always at a window where I could see the trains when they went by.

That went for school, too. My junior high was just up the street and I enjoyed classes on the east side of the building in sight of the NYC, by then Penn Central. They might have distracted from my work just a little bit.

One of the best parts of living alongside the NYC was during the winter. Once the creek that meandered along the tracks had frozen over, I was there, ice skating as often as I could. This also allowed for brief encounters with NYC and PC trains. More than once I stood on the ice and waved at the crew, receiving a lot of extra toots on the horn from the engineer. I'd even try to race the trains on my skates, but never managed to win. While I was quick on skates, I wasn't that fast!

The only downside of living where we did was I didn't get to see as much traffic on the Nickel Plate or B&O. Eventually, a bicycle and later a car helped ease that problem, but by then the B&O was gone and the N&W was often nocturnal, save for the local yard crew.

Part of my education in railroading came from living across the field from Difco. I watched a lot of Difco side-dump cars roll off the assembly line for delivery to the T&OC Findlay local. The delivery method was interesting, as the bridge over Howard Run was only strong enough for a single car. Using their homebuilt engine — made from an interurban freight motor with a Buda gas prime mover and crane — the Difco crew would push the cars onto the bridge with the one truck on the south side of the bridge and the other truck at the north end of the bridge. The Findlay yard crew would pick up the car or cars pulling them the rest of the way over the bridge and onto their train. Often the yard crew would use a reach car just so they didn't get too close to the spindly bridge.

During NYC days, motive power from

Norfolk & Western westbound train BC-36 from Bellevue rolls through Findlay on its way to Muncie, Ind., where it will turn south toward its Cincinnati terminus on the newly formed New Castle District, assembled in 1976 from former Nickel Plate and Pennsylvania lines.

Norfolk Southern local U-20-F is shoving empty ballast hoppers back to the National Lime & Stone loadout at the southern end of Western Avenue in Findlay. To the right of the train are the Cooper Tire & Rubber Company Corporate Offices with the plant in the background. This section of line is part of the original Findlay Belt Line that connected with the Findlay Fort Wayne & Western.

Alco and EMD were mainstays. If we were lucky, we'd see an occasional set of Baldwin RF16s "Sharks." It always amazed me that one could tell they were coming even before you could see them. There was a distinct sound to the De La Vergne 608A prime mover — a rumble like no other.

On more than one occasion I yelled at the top of my lungs "the Sharks are coming!" My father would grab his camera or stop what he was doing just to watch and listen to them go by. They were a sight to see! We witnessed some of them in lightning stripes, but most came through in the latter-day NYC cigar-band scheme.

CHANGE COMES TO FINDLAY

The Penn Central era brought changes to the local scene, as did the construction of a Whirlpool appliance plant in 1968. Rail service was used for in- and outbound shipments. Once the company built a warehouse, business on Penn Central went through the roof. So much so that they rebuilt the old siding that was mostly unused due to numerous street crossings. The siding was cut back to about a mile in length and a second one was added. They became known as the "New Deal" and "Big Deal" tracks.

The new business created by the deal with Whirlpool was an obvious name for the one track. As for the newer siding, that was named by workers putting it in. Management was in a hurry to get it in service to ease congestion and the push was on to finish it, thus the MOW crews called it the "Big Deal" track. The name stuck and Whirlpool is still a CSX customer today.

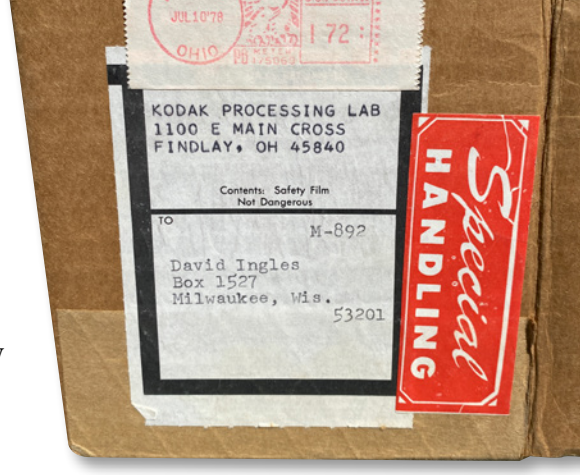
I watched the tracks being built and, one day, this 12-year-old decided the crew needed something to eat and drink. With the help of my mother, we made cookies and a camping cooler full of lemonade. I took it over to the workers one hot summer day and from then on, I was welcome any time I wanted to come over, especially if I brought lemonade and cookies.

New York Central, Penn Central, and Conrail kept yard engines in town to do local switching. During NYC days, it was an SW1 or similar-size switcher. With the Whirlpool traffic it became a haven for former NYC and Pennsylvania Railroad GP7s or GP9s.

A small servicing facility was just north of Sandusky Street where two or three Geeps would reside. Similarly, the "Whirlpool Turn," known just as WPT, ran north out of Columbus to Findlay six days a week with the same mix of former NYC and PRR Geeps. The PC yard in Findlay was located just south of Sandusky Street, located just across from the depot. Local business was served out of this yard until Conrail closed it in 1978.

It was not unusual to see three GP7 or GP9s working freights in the Penn Central era. However, one particular day it was a case of the wrong power on the wrong train. It was a nice summer evening and my family and I were out in the field across from the house throwing frisbees, boomerangs, and other such toys. We heard the sound of Geeps coming north with those 567s making quite the ruckus. As the train rolled by the field it gradually slowed down until it finally stopped. The train had stalled on the hill, tying up the north end of Findlay.

After a half-hour or so, the train started to move once again. Wondering how they got the train moving on the hill, we



The familiar Kodak shipping label that was applied to so many boxes was a testament to the quality of the processing at Kodak. The Findlay lab was the best in the country and they were proud of that fact.

Nickel Plate RS-36 873 leads a train at the Cherry Street crossing on a frigid winter's day. The B&O interchange track is barely visible to the left of the engine as a plowed area in the snow. Dale A. DeVene Sr.

Conrail's WSKE local out of Kenton has just picked up a brand-new heavy-duty flat car from Difco on the north side of Findlay. The Difco crew shoved the car as far across the Howard Run bridge as possible so the local could pick up the car and not cross it.

Difco was famous for its side dump ballast cars that continue to see service across North America's railroads. Black Mesa & Lake Powell is getting these two yellow cars.

The author (right) and his father watching trains at Fostoria in August 2008. Van Trepasso

ripped paper image: © Photka | Dreamstime.com

soon found out there were three big SDs pushing on the rear of the rather short train. A few days later we found out they had put the wrong power on the wrong train at Buckeye Yard in Columbus. I'm surprised the crew accepted the train, but they did; most likely the engineer thought he could handle it and gave it his best.

Penn Central was trying out Locotrol — a distributed-power technology developed by GE — on coal trains coming out of the mines in southern Ohio. It was a new and unproven system, but it would find a home on several Class I railroads. Typically, we'd see SD40s and SD45s on the head-end with three more tucked in mid-train.

We heard one particular train coming up the hill and, being good railfans, my dad and I went out to watch it go by the house. Sadly, the train came to a halt as the mid-train units managed to take themselves off-line, leaving the three units up front to do all the work. It was more than they could handle. Once the mid-train units were back online, the train headed north. It was our one and only experience with Locotrol units in Findlay.

My favorite event in Findlay was catching the B&O in town. Its trains were a rare occurrence for me, but I remember them fondly. The B&O came out of Lima running to Deshler, where they ran around the train and received orders to run to Findlay and return before heading down the branch into town. I can count on one hand the number of times I got to see them, but it was always a cherished moment when I did. Power was usually a GP7 or GP9 and an old wooden I-5 caboose along for the ride. Traffic was inbound power poles to the pole yard, interchange traffic to the N&W and NYC/PC, and an occasional car to the freight house located at the corner of North Cory Street and West High Street. Despite all that traffic on the New York Central, the B&O operations remained my favorite.

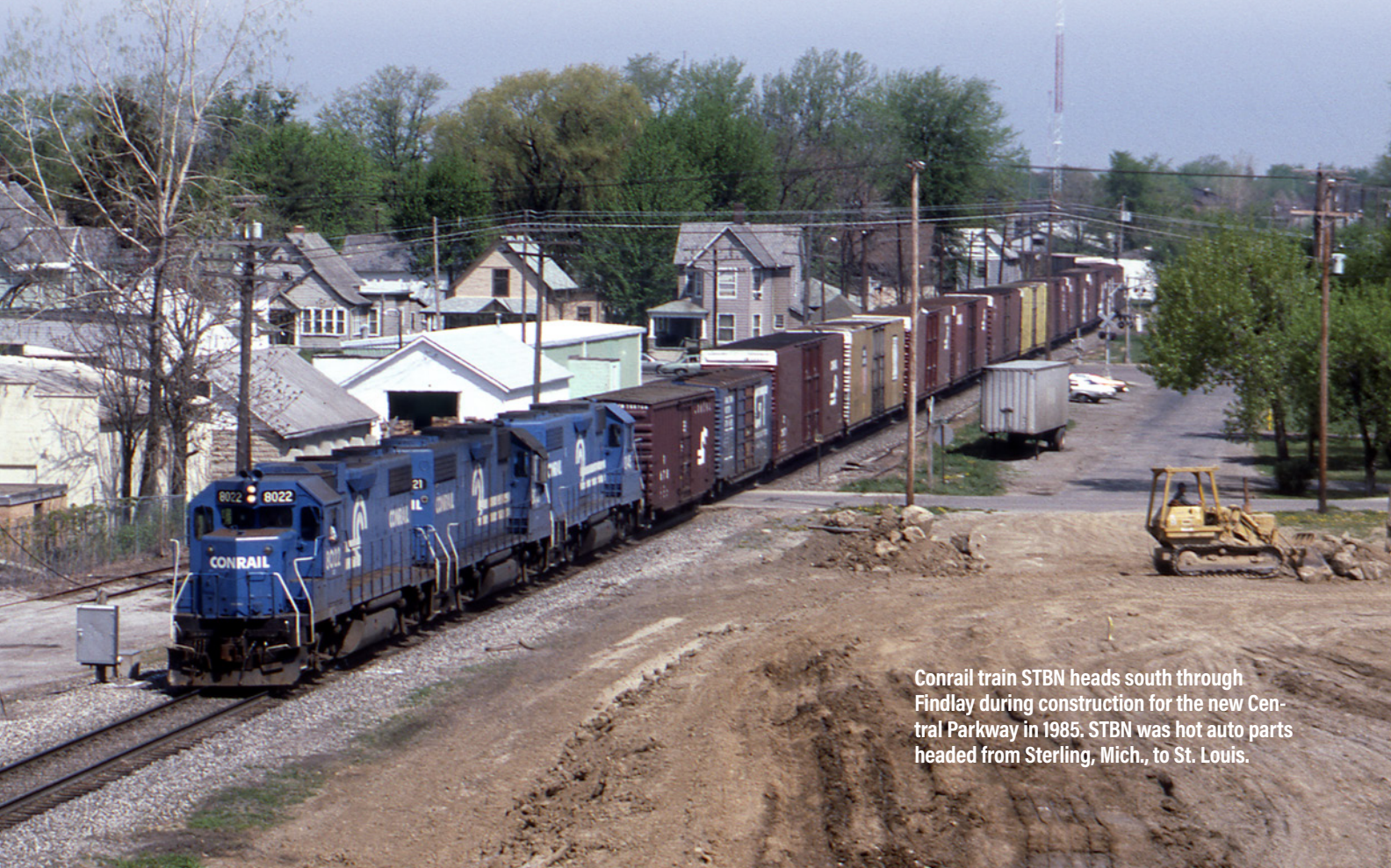
Likewise, Norfolk & Western kept a yard engine in town to serve local industries, among them Cooper Tire & Rubber, the old Standard Oil refinery, Hercules Tire, National Lime & Stone, and several smaller companies via a team track located at West Main Cross. Interchange traffic with NYC and C&O also kept the N&W yard crew busy. The enginehouse was in the northwest corner of Western Avenue and West Sandusky Street. It would easily hold a Geep, but when the railroad decided to bring in a U30B, crews had to secure the doors with rope!

FROM RAILFAN TO RAILROADER

Thanks to several friends of the family, I was able to make it into such places as F Tower in Fostoria and the Deshler dispatcher's office. I was even allowed to push a few buttons in F Tower, not knowing I would work the job in the future. The best was working the dispatcher's board at Deshler. I would go to work with the first-trick dispatcher and, after a day or so, he would turn me loose on the board and the railroad was mine to run, with his watchful eye on my plans.

Later, my friend Joe Slanser from Marion introduced me to John Lyon, the second-trick operator at MD Cabin. We hit it off and remain friends to this day. He knew the C&O was looking for operators, told me whom to contact, and soon I was qualifying with him at SA Tower in Upper Sandusky. Seeing a downturn in the operator craft, I left railroading in 1983 for the automotive industry. Railroading was truly a great experience, and while it didn't last as long as I wished for, I still "lived the dream" for a while, thanks to the early railroad education I received in Findlay.

DALE A. DEVENE JR. is a lifelong railfan and model railroader. Now retired, he spends time watching trains and working on his model railroad. Dale and his wife Susan enjoy spending time with their two daughters and grandsons. This is his first Classic Trains *byline.*



Conrail train STBN heads south through Findlay during construction for the new Central Parkway in 1985. STBN was hot auto parts headed from Sterling, Mich., to St. Louis.

Two men chat in front of a Chevrolet pickup truck next to the Santa Fe depot in Springer, N.M., on a bright summer morning in 1958. Springer is 40 miles west of Raton on the original Santa Fe main line, and you like to imagine the photographer specifically seeking out a depot with "his" name on it.

A glistening A-B set of E5s leads Fort Worth & Denver train 7, the *Texas Zephyr*, at Quanah, Texas, on Dec. 27, 1958. Located just outside the panhandle, Quanah sits about halfway between Amarillo and Fort Worth. The train was due there in the late morning and would arrive in Dallas that afternoon, having left Denver the previous evening.

EMBRACING THE EVERYDAY

FRED SPRINGER PHOTOGRAPHS CLASS I RAILROADING IN THE 1950S AND '60S

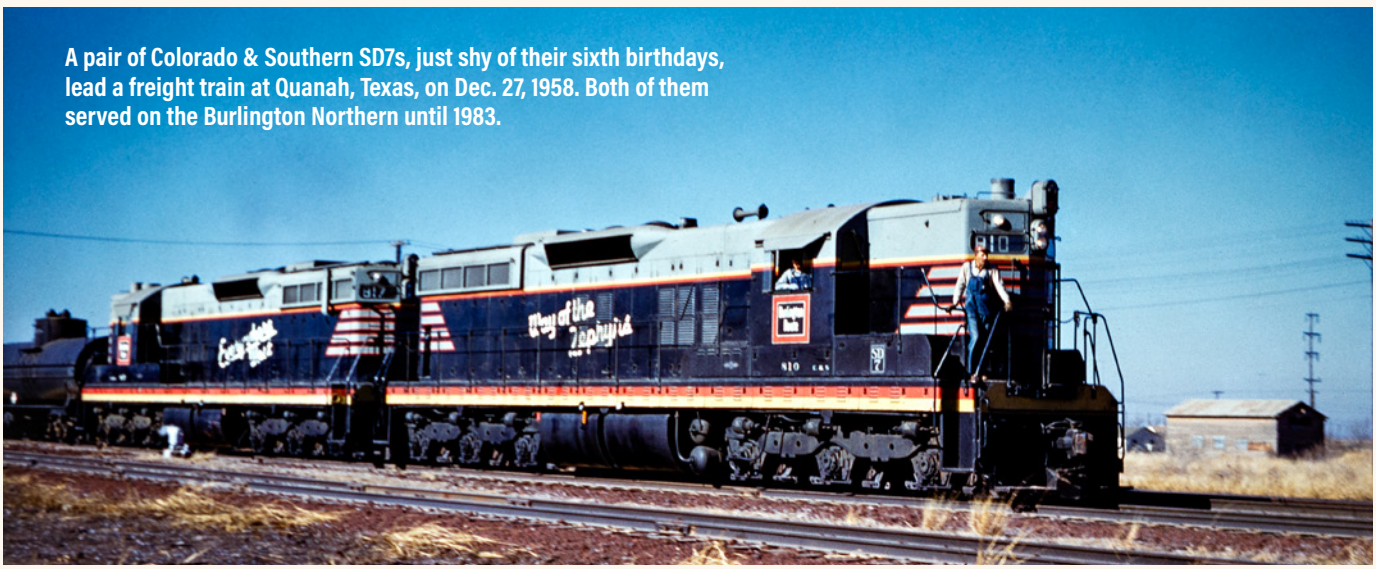
BY SCOTT LOTHES // Photos by Center for Railroad Photography & Art

In 1950, Fred Springer received a pass valid for 10 days in August, to ride in the cab of any Denver & Rio Grande Western locomotive anywhere on the system. That included standard gauge as well as narrow gauge, with the exception of the Silverton Branch, and was signed by none other than Alfred E. Perlman.

Springer kept that pass for the rest of his life, but he never used it. He did not find a narrow-gauge train to ride in August of 1950, and as he later explained in an interview with John Gruber, Springer "was not interested in the standard gauge — not in those days."

Luckily for all of us, not long after, Springer became more interested in all manner of railroads, including the big, standard-gauge ones. Born in 1928 in Washington, D.C., he grew up in Houston, Texas, and obtained an engineering degree from the Missouri School of Mines (now Missouri University of Science & Technology) in 1949. He then began what would become a lifetime career with the Mobil Oil Corp., which took him back to Houston until 1963 when he moved to New York for his first of three stints at the company's headquarters there.

Springer photographed railroads extensively throughout his life. He was especially active in and around Texas during the late



A pair of Colorado & Southern SD7s, just shy of their sixth birthdays, lead a freight train at Quanah, Texas, on Dec. 27, 1958. Both of them served on the Burlington Northern until 1983.

The fedora-wearing crew of Santa Fe's mixed train between Carlsbad, N.M., and Pecos, Texas, performs some switching with their safety-striped Alco RSD5 at Loving, New Mexico, on Sept. 19, 1959.

Above and left: On the high, hot plains of eastern Colorado not far from the Kansas line, six first-generation EMD diesels accelerate a Rock Island freight train near Burlington on July 16, 1961. Turning around, the photographer also recorded the relatively new wide-vision caboose bringing up the rear.

Few railroad photographers in 1959 would have burned a frame of Kodachrome on a subject as prosaic as the gate protecting the crossing of the Santa Fe and Missouri Pacific in the southwestern outskirts of Wichita, Kan. Fred Springer did, and in doing so, he recorded both an informative and evocative view of branch line railroading on the plains.

A four-unit set of Santa Fe FTs with a freight train east holds the main somewhere between Lubbock and Amarillo as passenger train 94, the *Eastern Express,* runs around it through the siding. Steam from the train's heating line wafts into the lower left corner of the image as a crewmember of the freight walks back to the cab beneath a sky of somber winter clouds spread out across the fallow fields.

The engineer of the *Texas Zephyr* checks the loading progress of passengers, baggage, mail, and express at Quanah, Texas, on Dec. 27, 1958.

1950s and early 1960s. We shared some examples from that time in the Fall 2020 installment of "Archives Treasures," which focused on the region's short lines.

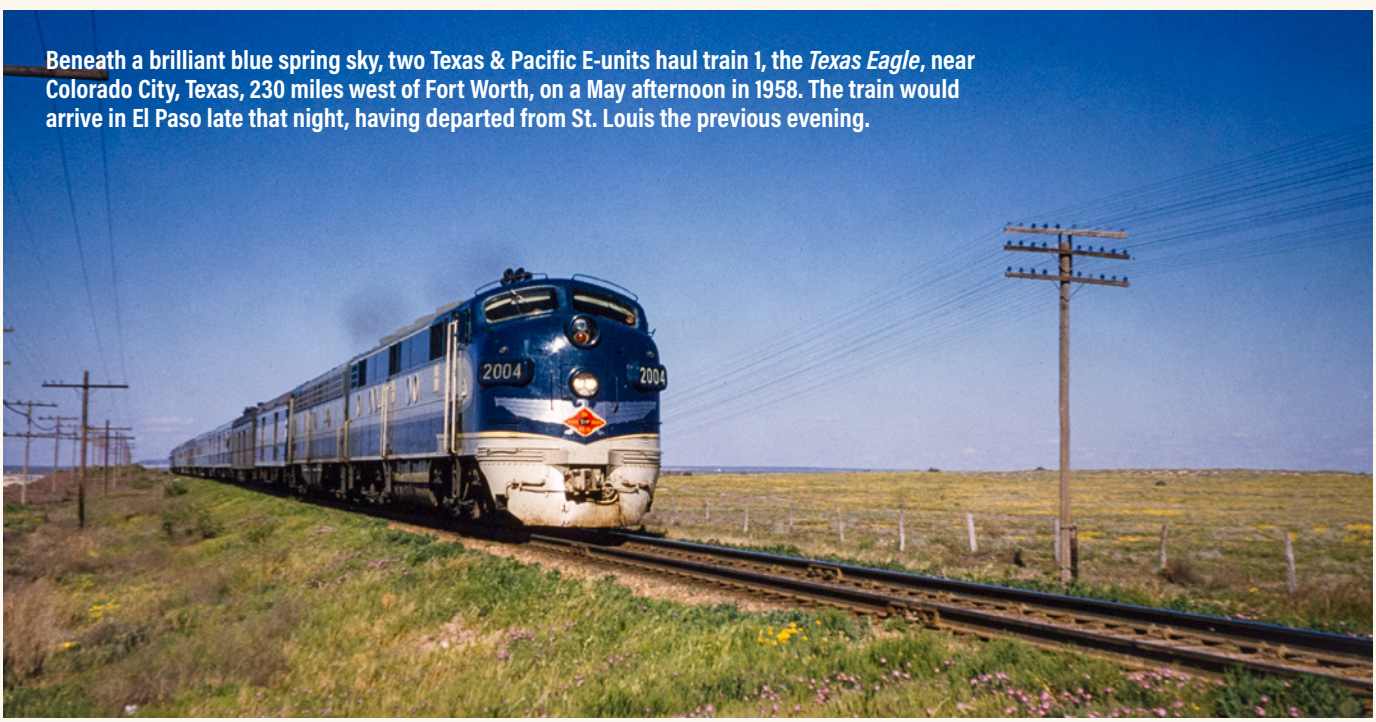
While Springer tended to favor the charms of small railroads his entire life, during the 1950s he began to discover the drama and intrigue of larger operations.

The timing of Springer's expanding interests is noteworthy and a bit of a contrast to prevailing trends of the era. The 1950s saw the contraction of many longtime photography enthusiasts' interests during the railroad industry's wholesale transition from steam to diesel power.

With his beloved narrow-gauge lines struggling, Springer himself could have easily decided to hang up his cameras. Instead, he slowly wound down his medium-format black-and-white photography and quickly ramped up his shooting of 35mm Kodachrome slides.

While he focused on trains and locomotives, Springer took in much more of the railroad scene. When traveling by passenger train, he frequently shot from the rear platform in scenes reminiscent of those recorded a generation earlier by legendary railroad executive John W. Barriger III. On the ground, too, Springer aimed his cameras at everything from sprawling en-

From the rear of Santa Fe train 94, the *Eastern Express* running from Lubbock to Amarillo, Texas, Springer recorded a simple but poignant view of the railroad in small-town American life at Kress, Texas, on Jan. 30, 1960. Late afternoon sunlight rakes across the scene from right to left as the train order signals stand against the cloud-smeared sky. As the last car clears the gravel crossing connecting East and West Main Street, a woman walks down the platform with five children; perhaps they had just seen somebody off. The depot was later moved and still stands today in Brownville, Texas.



Beneath a brilliant blue spring sky, two Texas & Pacific E-units haul train 1, the *Texas Eagle*, near Colorado City, Texas, 230 miles west of Fort Worth, on a May afternoon in 1958. The train would arrive in El Paso late that night, having departed from St. Louis the previous evening.

gine terminals to humble depots, opening for us an invaluable window to the railroad world of his time and place.

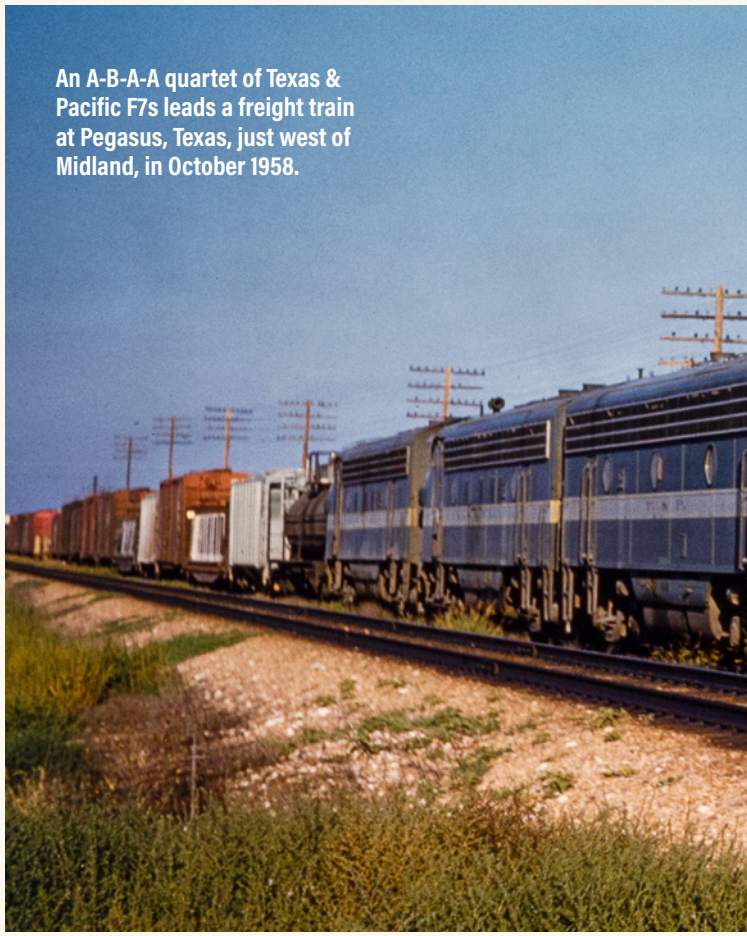
By switching to slide film and taking a more expansive view of railroading, Springer helped portray the industry's colorful early diesel era in a part of the country few other photographers were covering at the time. While he certainly mourned the demise of favorite narrow-gauge lines like the Rio Grande Southern and the Southern Pacific in California's Owens Valley, his slides show the Class I railroads of Texas and neighboring states in the late 1950s and '60s had plenty of visual interest to offer.

Springer found glistening *Zephyr*s and workaday SD7s on the Fort Worth & Denver, tiger-striped EMDs and Alcos as well as blue-and-yellow FTs on the Santa Fe, a half-dozen Rock Island Geeps and F-units hauling freight across the high plains, and plenty of Texas & Pacific cab units pulling freight and their flagship *Texas Eagle* passenger train.

From the distance of 60 years, these subjects are exceptional. At the time, though, they were the everyday — dare we say, "mundane" — experience of railroading.

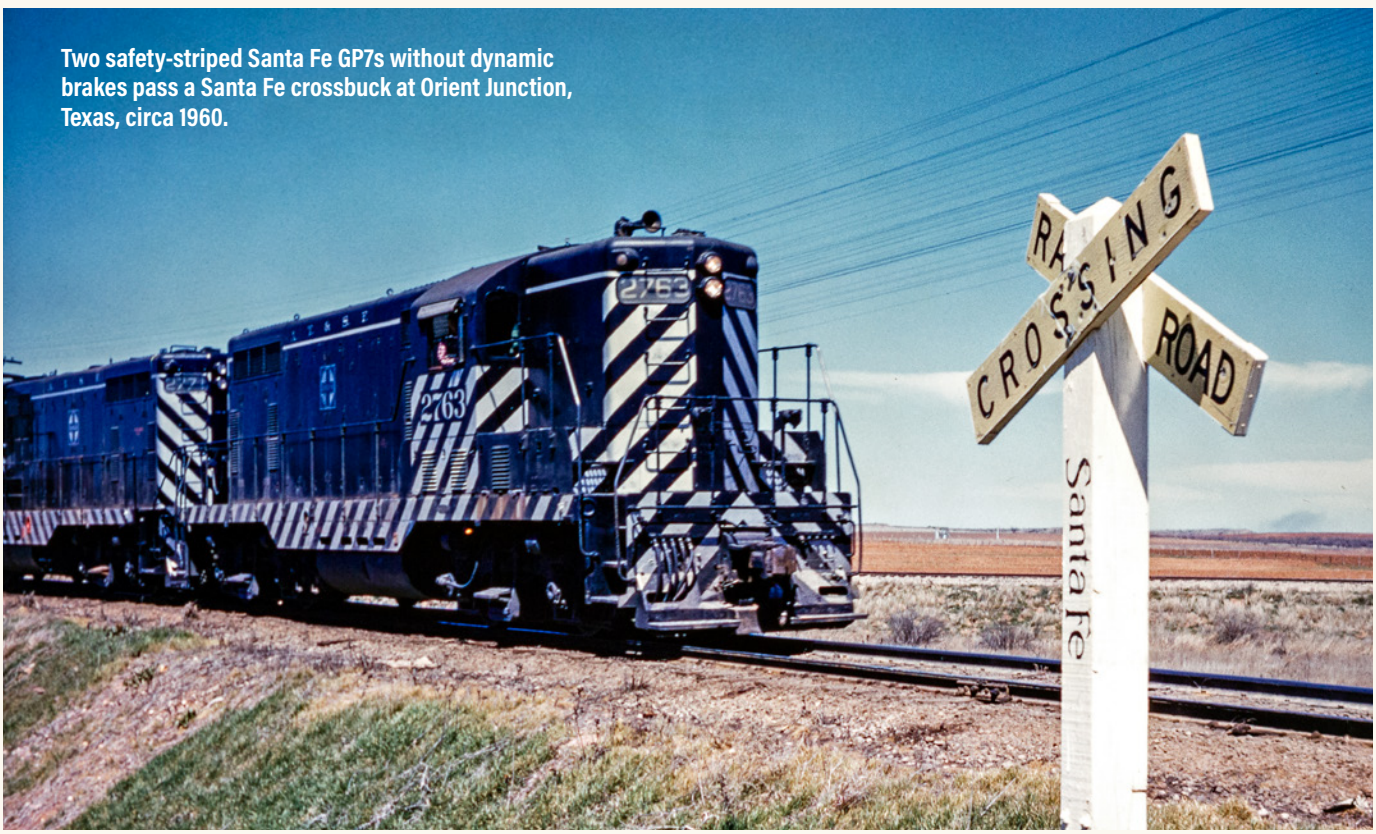
Consider the photographer, too. Fred Springer died in 2012 at age 84. He was a generous benefactor to many railroad organizations. He left his entire photography collection to the Center for Railroad Photography & Art along with funds that allowed us to begin the professionalization and institutionalization of our archiving efforts. We look back today and regard him as one of the "old masters" of traditional railroad photography.

Yet, when he exposed his rolls of Kodachrome in the 1950s and 1960s, he was a young man in his 20s and 30s, breaking with traditions by photographing diesels instead of steam and with 35mm color film instead of larger format black-and-white. In that regard, he has more than a little in common with today's



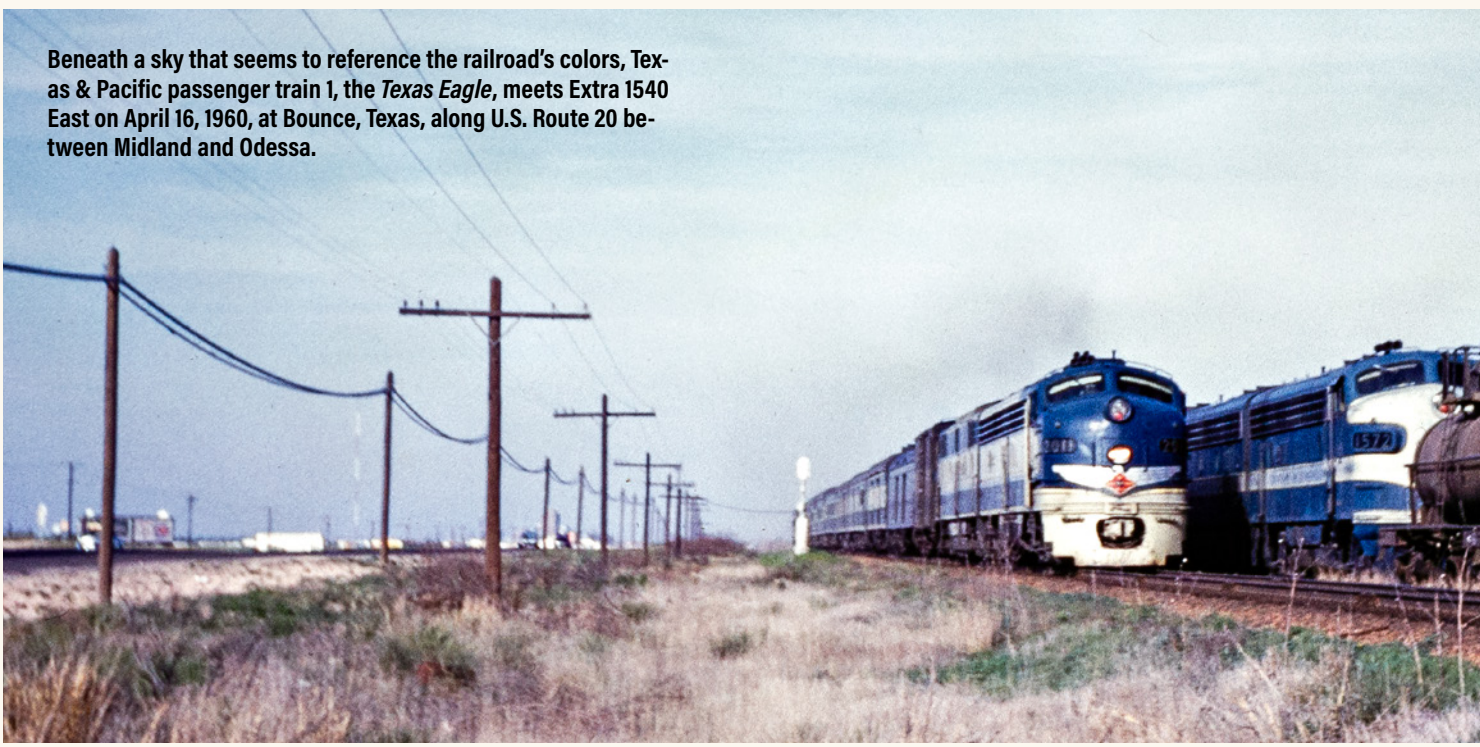
An A-B-A-A quartet of Texas & Pacific F7s leads a freight train at Pegasus, Texas, just west of Midland, in October 1958.

Dallas Union Terminal 0-6-0 No. 7 couples to the rear platform of T&P business car No. 1 on Aug. 16, 1959. Santa Fe F units stand in the background.



Two safety-striped Santa Fe GP7s without dynamic brakes pass a Santa Fe crossbuck at Orient Junction, Texas, circa 1960.

Texas & Pacific E7 2001 stands proudly in April 1960 at the head of train 1, the *Texas Eagle*. Springer captured it during its stop at Big Spring, Texas.



Beneath a sky that seems to reference the railroad's colors, Texas & Pacific passenger train 1, the *Texas Eagle*, meets Extra 1540 East on April 16, 1960, at Bounce, Texas, along U.S. Route 20 between Midland and Odessa.

Although Amtrak was barely five years away, Houston Union Station still had quite a bit of activity on the afternoon of Jan. 16, 1966. The last train departed in 1974, and the tracks are now gone, but the building (in the background at left) remains. It serves as the lobby for Minute Maid Park, home of the Houston Astros professional baseball team.

young fans who post their drone videos of BNSF Railway and Amtrak trains on YouTube and TikTok.

Ultimately, then, Springer's photos of Class I railroads show the great value — across generations — of embracing the everyday. From standard depots and crack passenger trains to rare diesels and lonely rural diamonds protected only by manual gates, his slides preserve in vivid color the world as it existed then, all around him.

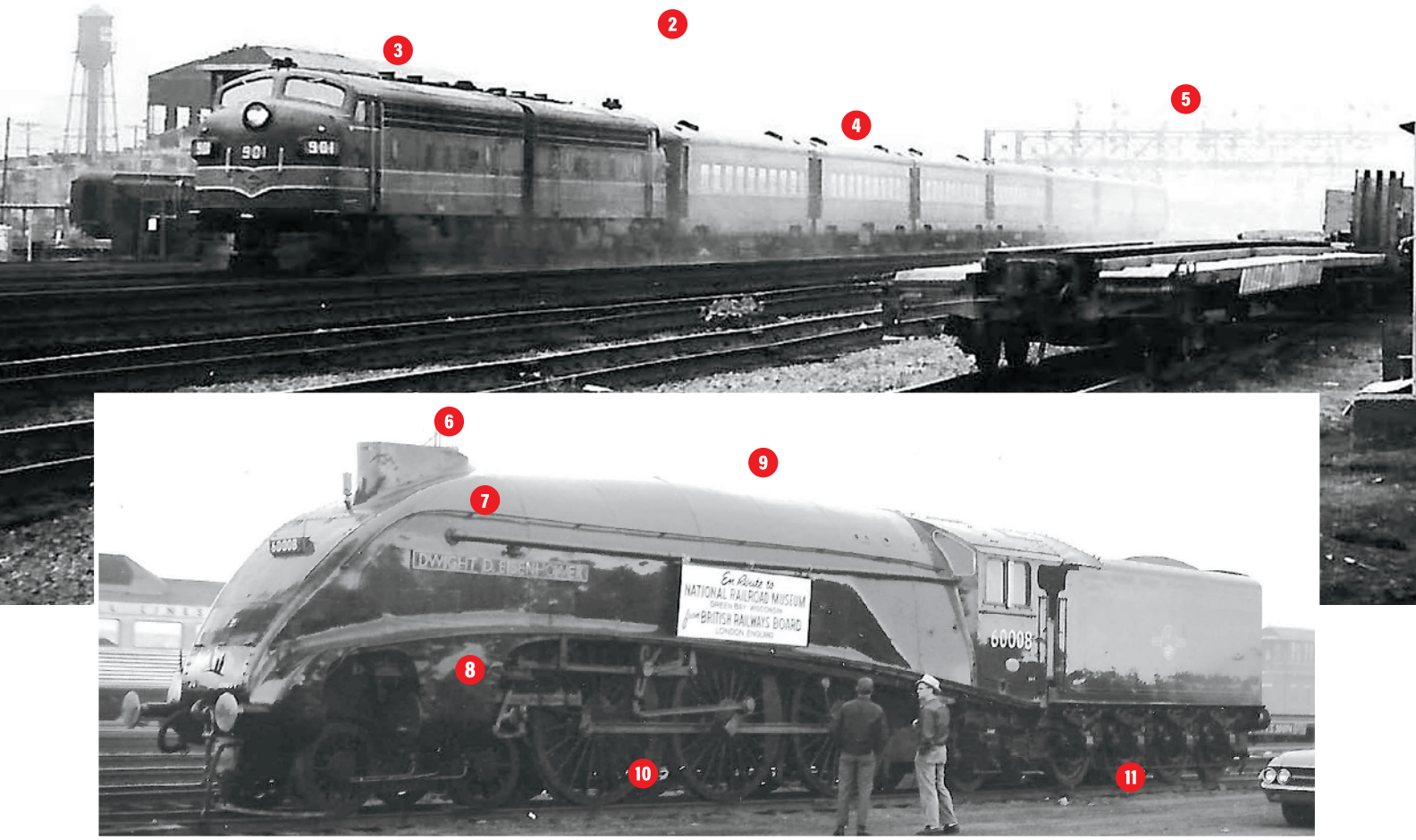
By training his lenses on subjects that were common enough to be considered banal at the time, Springer captured something of the essence of his time and place. How fortunate we are that he widened his railroad interests beyond the narrow gauge. ■

CRP&A | CENTER FOR RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY & ART

British Rail 4-6-2 'Dwight D. Eisenhower' at Jersey City

A celebrity arrival on our shores is seen with Reading's *Wall Street* May 12, 1964

BY JERRY A. PINKEPANK // Photos by the author



In 1964, the Central of New Jersey was welcoming to photographers at the trackage beyond the platforms of its Jersey City station and ferry terminal. This facility was shared with parent Reading Co., and was also once served by Reading parent Baltimore & Ohio. Since coming to New York City in September 1962 I'd made photo trips across the Hudson on the CNJ ferries (which served both CNJ and Reading passengers, and in B&O days also carried B&O buses that served Manhattan). I'd been made welcome at the Communipaw engine terminal that served the station. Louis Marre phoned me to request that I go to Jersey City to take black-and-white photos of a streamlined British Railways 4-6-2 that had arrived in New York Harbor on May 11 and was said to be in the CNJ yard awaiting movement on its own wheels to Green Bay, Wis. So, I felt comfortable doing that and walking off the platform ends looking for it, just as I'd done in going to the engine terminal. It turned out to be not hard to find.

1 London & North Eastern class A-4 Pacific
The *Dwight D. Eisenhower* was built in September 1937 at LNER's Doncaster Works, one of 35 three-cylinder streamlined racers designed by Sir Nigel Gresley in 1935 and built until 1938. It was retired in 1963. First named *Golden Shuttle*, it was renamed in honor of the European Theater's Supreme Allied Commander in September 1945. The specifications include three 18.5x26-inch cylinders, 80-inch drivers, 250 pounds boiler pressure, 34,555 pounds tractive effort, and 41.25 square feet grate area. (British engines have relatively small grate area due to the high-BTU coal employed.) Because of the renaming of the engine, it held a special place in the attention of Harold E. Fuller, president of Green Bay Steel Tube Corp., a patron of the National Railroad Museum in Green Bay. By strong

personal effort, including visits to England, he obtained the locomotive as a gift from British Railways to the museum. BR also donated two passenger cars from a wartime special train in which Eisenhower had his sleeping quarters and met with staff and the officers of Allied nations. Unnamed donors paid for the ocean freight and rail freight costs. The engine was moved to Green Bay on its own wheels over five railroads. Due to the vacuum brake fitting of the engine, it had to be handled at slow speed as an unbraked vehicle. The engine's assignment at King's Cross for its London-Edinburgh operation on BR's East Coast main line is indicated just above the buffer beam.

2 Reading train 621, 'The Wall Street'
Departing Jersey City at 5:42 p.m. and scheduled to arrive at Reading Terminal in Philadelphia at 7:28 p.m., the train covered 90.3 miles in 106 minutes. That's a 51.02 mph average with seven intermediate stops. Its companion train, *The Crusader*, left an hour earlier on an identical schedule. Both carried a surcharge over regular coach fare, but there were no first-class cars on either train.

3 EMD FP7 901 and sister
No. 901 was built May 1950. All eight Reading FP7s had 89 mph gearing and 2,500 pounds-per-hour capacity steam generator.

4 Eight-car passenger consist
The train is made up of seven streamlined coaches from the 2000-2016 series built at Reading shops 1947-48 from earlier non-streamlined steel coaches and matching cafe car 2060. The original stainless steel *Crusader* cars were sold to Canadian National in November 1963, so, in 1964, the *Crusader* was also made up of coaches from the 2000-2016 series, one of which was converted to provide cafe car service. In 1967 RDC cars took over both trains.

5 Nine-track inbound signal bridge
It was installed in 1915 and controlled by Tower A of Jersey City Terminal. The Aldene Plan of 1967 closed CNJ's Jersey City Terminal as all passenger trains were diverted to Erie-Lackawanna's Hoboken Terminal, to which Erie's trains had already moved in 1956.

6 Kylchap double chimney
This improvement, under a streamline housing, was installed on the A-4s as original equipment on the last four then retrofitted to the rest of the class beginning in 1956. The Eisenhower received its upgrade in August 1958.

7 Nameplate with red background
The rest of the A-4s' nameplates had a black background. This distinctive feature was lost when the engine made the trip back over the Atlantic to England in 2012 for a three-year loan and was repainted in what was otherwise a more authentic scheme than the one that had been applied earlier at Green Bay.

8 Three-cylinder arrangement
The streamlining conceals the center cylinder. Although this is a Gresley engine, one would not see the "Gresley link" across the front of the cylinder saddle, familiar on U.S. three-cylinder locomotives, because the A-4s used a later Gresley design, the conjugated valve gear. The outside cylinders used conventional Walschaert valve gear.

9 Boiler changes
British practice involved routine changing of boilers at major overhauls, exchanging from one engine to another in rotation; this engine had 11 such changes, the last in 1962 when it received the boiler of sister *Bittern*.

10 Spoked drivers
It is notable that the A-4s used conventional spoked drivers rather than the disk or BoxPok drivers used for higher speed in the U.S.

11 Pedestal tender
This features four axles in a rigid frame rather than trucks. This concept was also used in the U.S. on engines such as the New York Central J-3a "Super Hudsons." The A-4 tenders were designed for non-stop running between London and Edinburgh, 400 miles. Engine crews changed en route using a passageway along the inside of the tank, and water was taken on the fly from track pans using a scoop. This arrangement that had been used on various lines in England since the 1860s, long before it was done on U.S. roads. Tender fuel capacity was just 8.95 U.S. tons but sufficed despite the horsepower demands of high speeds, due to the high-BTU coal and the relatively light trailing load of British passenger trains — about 840 U.S. tons compared with 1,200 tons for the 15-car 1938 *20th Century Limited*.

The Lehigh Valley's tower at Athens, Pa. controlled the throat to its yard at Sayre. At right, a towerman watches the two main tracks. The microphone and other equipment are arranged to leave his hands free to copy paperwork including clearance forms. Robert Archer

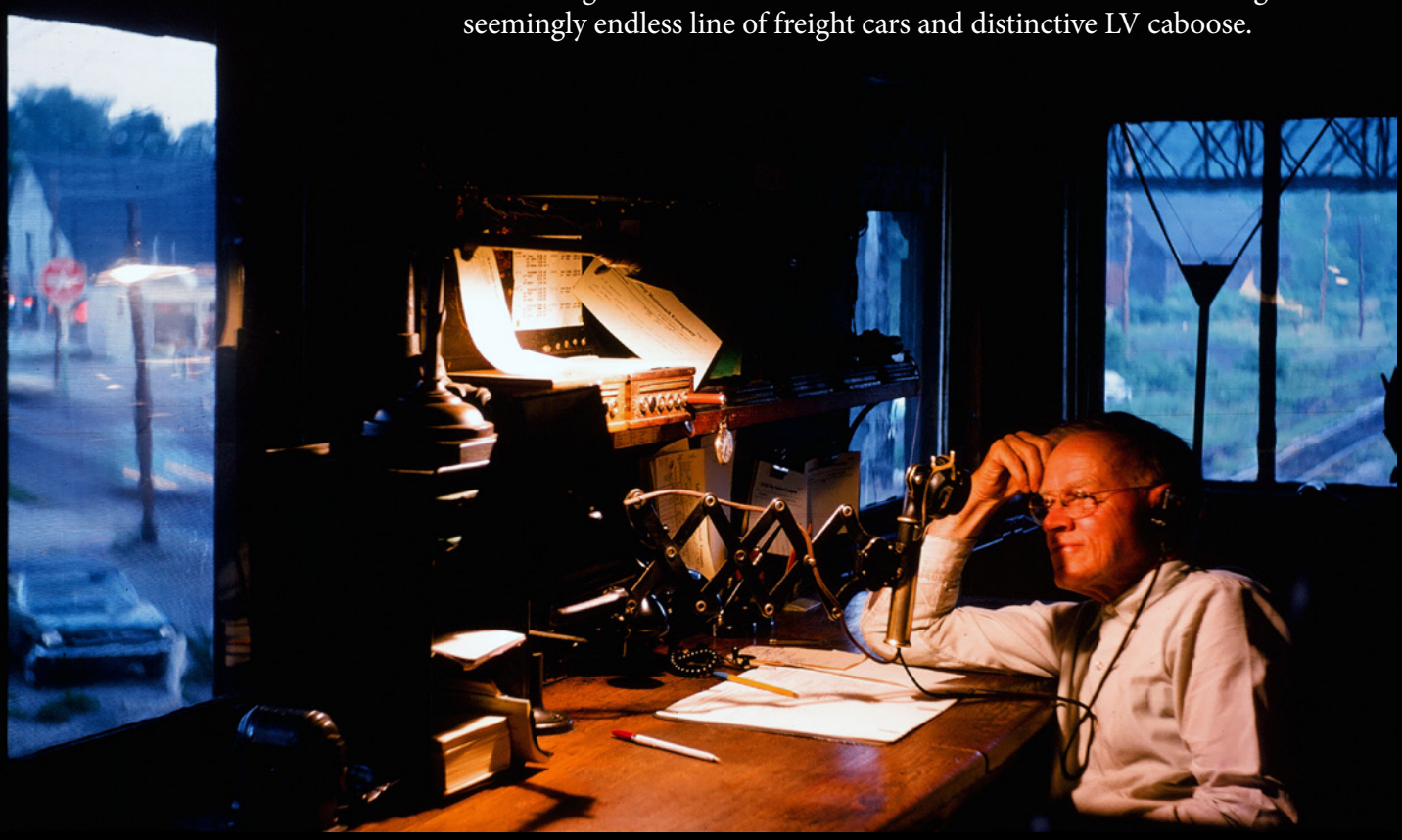
THIRD TRICK AT ATHENS, PA.

THINGS GO SMOOTHLY FOR A RELIEF LEHIGH VALLEY TOWERMAN – *UNTIL THEY DON'T*

BY DAVID MARCHAM

It was a beautiful late-summer evening when I left an Athens, Pa., diner and began walking along North Main Street. It was quiet as there was little traffic on this main artery that connected the Wilkes-Barre area, Sayre, and the New York-Pennsylvania border.

Most of the 4,400 residents of this northern Pennsylvania community were no doubt preparing for a good night's rest. But the quiet was interrupted by the deep-throated whistle of an approaching Lehigh Valley locomotive. Up ahead, I could see crossing gates lowering and soon a large 4-8-4 locomotive trundled across Main Street trailing a seemingly endless line of freight cars and distinctive LV caboose.



While the interlocking plant at Athens Tower was electrically operated, the crossing gates for Main Street were not. A towerman works the pump lever that raised and lowered each set of gates individually. He had three minutes to lower three sets of gates. Robert Archer

A souvenir from one of the author's visits to Athens. Shot with a Kodak box camera in the late 1940s, this view captures the tower, left, and the signal bridge controlling the approach to Sayre Yard. The shot is from the Athens station platform. David Marcham

Townspeople in many otherwise peaceful communities might resent the nightly sounds of the passing trains. However, this probably wasn't the case in Athens and neighboring Sayre as the railroad provided jobs and income for a sizable portion of the people. Both could be reasonably identified as "railroad towns" thanks to the presence of the LV's large Sayre shop facilities and home terminal for numerous train and engine crews.

Once the train cleared the crossing and the gates were up, I crossed the tracks and climbed the stairs to Athens Tower. It was about 9:35 p.m., June 29, 1950, when I was greeted and briefed by the second-trick towerman-telegrapher. He had just reported the early arrival of westbound train JM-1, a low-priority Jersey City to Manchester freight.

Athens was the dividing point between the Buffalo-headquartered dispatcher controlling all operations west of Sayre and the Wilkes-Barre dispatcher whose territory covered the main and branch lines east to Lehighton. The latter was the Athens towermen's boss and they were expected to respond to his calls quickly and promptly report the passage of trains.

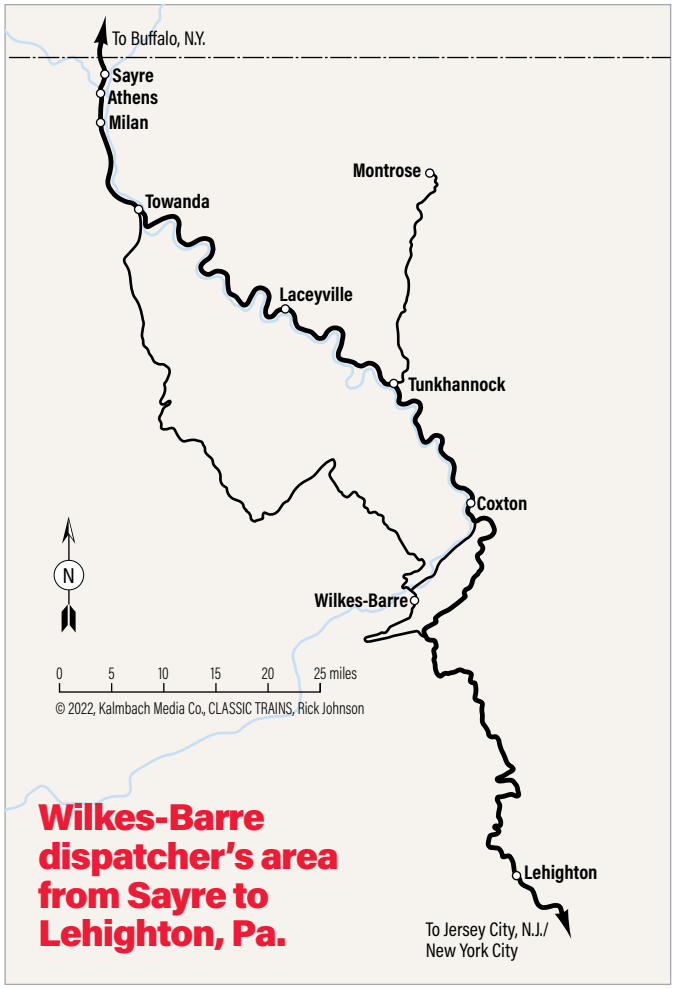
Under union rules, train and enginemen were not allowed to talk directly with dispatchers (except in emergencies) but instead communicated via the operators. All train orders and other messages from the dispatcher to train conductors and engineers were dictated to the operators who then delivered them in writing, typically by hand or using train-order hoops.

The Wilkes Barre dispatcher's territory encompassed the 150-mile central part of the Lehigh Valley's 448-mile main line that stretched from Jersey City, N.J. to Buffalo, N.Y. Lehighton (MP 119) was at the east end, Gracedale (MP 159), Mountain Tops (MP 160), Wilkes-Barre (MP 176), Coxton Yard (MP 186), Tunkhannock (MP 207), Towanda (MP 254), Athens (MP 169) and Sayre (MP 171). Coxton Yard was a crew-change point for freights and base for helper crews. Branch lines beginning at Penn Haven Junction (MP 131) and Tannery (MP 144) tapped the network of anthracite coal branches in the Hazleton area.

The main line was double-tracked, except for an 11-mile single-track section between Mountain Top (MP 160) and Conway (MP 171) five miles east of Wilkes-Barre. Freight trains operated over the double-track 20.5-mile Mountain Cutoff between Gracedale and Coxton. The main and Mountain Cutoff were operated under Rule 251 signaling which provided for operation in one direction only.

The Athens interlocking plant had 32 pistol-grip levers that controlled three sets of upper-quadrant and three sets of dwarf

Lehigh Valley System Map



Wilkes-Barre dispatcher's area from Sayre to Lehighton, Pa.

signals, two switches, one trailing-point crossover and four switch locks. It was a relatively new plant with everything electrically controlled, rather than many of the other mainline towers that had floor-based "Armstrong" levers that moved the switches through trackside rods. A large signal, switch, and track occupancy display panel hung over the levers. Athens tower controlled the east ends of the eastbound and westbound Sayre yard leader tracks.

The towermen's desk faced the two main tracks and had telephone and telegraph instruments, a telephone headset, microphone on a collapsible extension arm, and a pedal under the desk which turned on the microphone when depressed. The telephone arrangement enabled towermen to have both hands free to copy clearance cards, train orders, and messages from the dispatchers, and to listen without the microphone being on.

The telegraph system consisted of a key and sounders. There were two lines: one for message work and another for use in case of a telephone transmission problem. All the train dispatchers' business and local communications were conducted by telephone. Nearly all the railroad's messages were transmitted by telegraph; by 1950 LV employed almost 400 telegraphers.

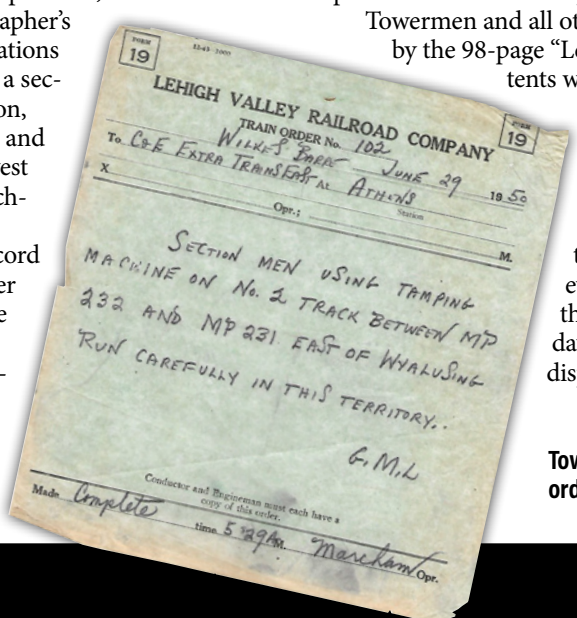
There were four telephone lines into Athens Tower: one each for the Buffalo and Wilkes-Barre dispatchers; a block line connected to the Towanda agent-telegrapher's office together with intermediate stations and wayside telephone booths; and a second linking Athens tower and station, Sayre passenger station, yard office, and State Line Tower (MP 173) at the west end of the Sayre Yard. A small switchboard had plug holes for each line.

On the desk was a daily train record sheet and supply of blank train order forms, clearance cards, and message forms to be completed at the direction of the train dispatcher. The carbon sheets were necessary since most of these were copied in triplicate, one for each engineer, one for each conductor and a third for tower records. A Y-shaped wooden train-order hoop was kept near the desk ready to deliver paperwork to the train engineers.

Conductors received paperwork via a unique combination of hoop-and-basket hung outside the window. Towermen tied the paperwork to the hoop string and lowered the basket and hoop for the conductor or flagman to receive and for them to deliver the train consist summary. This document provided a count of cars in the train separated by destination group, loads by type of commodity, and empties by type of car. The conductor was in possession of all the waybills and empty car cards in his train.

Towermen and all other operating employees were governed by the 98-page "Lehigh Valley Book of Rules." The contents were dedicated to insuring safe, efficient railroad operations; the first sentence emphasized, "Safety is of the first importance in the discharge of duty."

This would be my last night doing vacation relief work for the third-trick towerman-telegrapher. As in previous evenings and with no trains expected for the next two hours, I began reading the day's train register while listening to the dispatchers' lines. Athens daily freight op-



Tower operators copied and relayed train orders like this one. David Marcham collection

One of Lehigh Valley's T-2 4-8-4s is in charge of a symbol freight of reefers near Rummerfield, Pa., east of Towanda. It took some burly power to keep trains on time given the topography of the line that followed the curvy Susquehanna River. Donald Furler

Sayre Yard was also a major shop complex for the Lehigh Valley. It boasted a huge roundhouse and facilities for maintenance and heavy repairs of the railroad's steam locomotive and rolling stock fleets. Here, the yard switcher assembles a train. David Marcham

erations usually consisted of six westbound symbol (scheduled) and up two westbound extra trains, four symbol and two to four extra eastbound trains, plus two local freights each way. The symbol trains generally operated close to their published times.

The Lehigh Valley passenger service west of Coxton included the daytime *Black Diamonds* Nos. 9 and 10 (eastbound trains had even numbers, westbound odd); 11 and 4, the overnight *Star*; and 7 and 8, the *Maple Leaf*. The overnight trains carried coach and sleeping car passengers. These also were typically operated on or very close to their advertised times.

My particular interest was the progress of trains headed for Athens. Lehighton Tower reported the on-time departure of No. 7, the *Maple Leaf*, at 10:07 p.m. Ithaca reported No. 4, the *Star*, a Buffalo-New York City train, out on schedule at 11:04 p.m. Lehighton reported the departure of FFW-1 at 11:15 p.m. It was a recently introduced high-speed piggyback train to capture the growing market of long-distance truck traffic.

Shortly before midnight, I turned to watch the display panel for the departure of No. 4 from Sayre station. A bell sounded and a track occupancy light appeared at 11:57p.m. I pulled out the eastbound mainline home signal lever to give the engineer a proceed indication then walked over to the windows facing North Main Street, where the controls for the crossing gates were located.

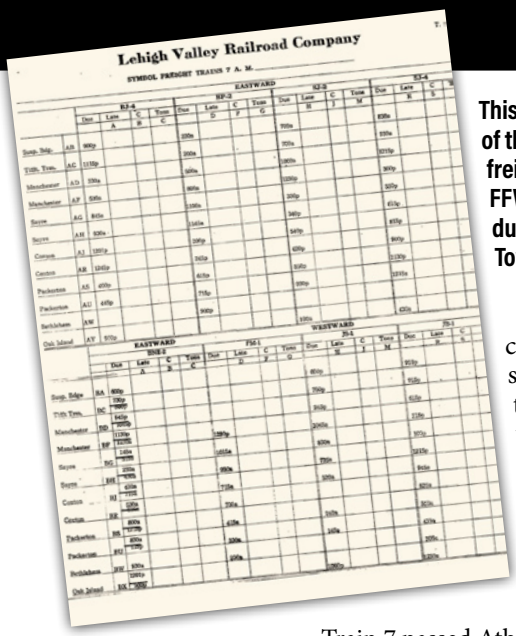
A pump lever actuated a hydraulic system that lowered and raised each set of gates one at a time. For eastbound passenger trains, towermen had three minutes to lower all three sets of double-arm gates: one for northbound and another for southbound Main Street, and a third for traffic from the nearby station. Passenger trains in both directions sped through at the maximum 75 mph. Freights entering and leaving Sayre yard leader tracks were limited to 15.

Train 4 passed Athens at exactly midnight with a scheduled 6:55 a.m. arrival at New York City's Penn Station. I promptly reported the passage of this *Star* to the two dispatchers and the Towanda agent-telegrapher.

I continued to monitor the Wilkes-Barre dispatcher line and heard Coxton Tower report the departure of train No. 7 at 12:05 a.m. followed closely by a westbound extra freight led by a Class N 2-8-2, and later FFW-1 at 1:30 a.m. The dispatcher apparently estimated that the quarter-century-old locomotive could reach Athens and Sayre before FFW-1 arrived about at 3 a.m.

Westbound symbol freights were normally allowed 2 hours 15 minutes for the 83 miles from Coxton to Athens. However, FFW-1 had an authorized 60 mph speed limit and was expected cover the same distance in 1 hour 35 minutes. Unknown to me at the time, the extra's crew had been on duty since 11 a.m. the previous day and would reach its 16-hour federally mandated hours of service limit at 3 a.m.

Tunkhannock reported the *Maple Leaf* by at 12:26 a.m. and the extra at 12:45. With Laceyville (MP 225) closed during the night and on weekends, the Lehigh Valley used an outdoor mi-


Lehigh Valley Railroad Company

SYMBOL FREIGHT TRAINS 7 A. M.

EASTWARD

WESTWARD

This sheet tracked progress of the railroad's symbol freights. The author saw FFW-1 and BNE-2 play roles during his time in Athens Tower. David Marcham collection

crophone to capture the sounds of passing trains. It turned on when a train entered the eastbound or westbound signal blocks. I heard the sound of No. 7 at 12:44 and the westbound extra at 1:10 a.m.

Train 7 passed Athens at 1:32 while its counterpart No. 8 sped past the tower at 1:56, both on time. Towanda reported the extra west by about 2:05 a.m. and FFW-1 could be heard passing the open microphone about 2:10.

About 2:45, the Wilkes-Barre dispatcher called to ask if I'd seen the westbound extra. My answer was no. Soon the local Towanda line phone began ringing. To my surprise, it was the extra's engineer asking to speak to the dispatcher.

Once connected, the engineer said he'd stopped his train at Milan (4 miles east of Athens) because of a hotbox on the tender. It couldn't move until the journal box cooled and was repacked. He added the crews would "outlaw" in 15 minutes. The dispatcher told him he'd get a relief locomotive and crew as soon as possible.

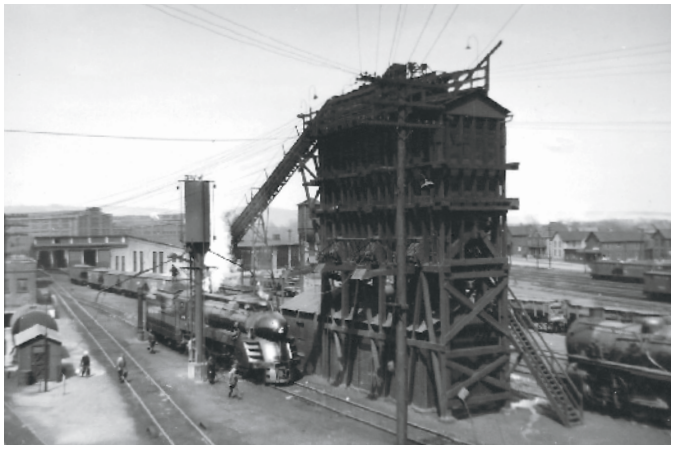
Once back on the engine, the engineer sounded one long and three short whistle blasts signaling the flagman to protect the rear of the train. Under Rule 99, the flagman was required to take a red fusee and two track torpedoes and walk back a sufficient distance to stop a following train. The torpedoes were to be secured to the rails and fusee lit upon approach of a train.

The dispatcher immediately called the Towanda operator and instructed him to stop FFW-1, then called the Sayre yardmaster and asked him to send a crew and engine east as soon as possible to bring back the disabled train. The yardmaster answered he would have neither available for more than an hour as they were busy switching the just-arrived, hour-late BNE-2 eastbound freight. More manpower was tied up assembling four merchandise trains including the night moves to Auburn and Cortland, N.Y., the high priority Delaware & Hudson train to Binghamton with cars for eastern New York and New England, plus an extra eastbound freight destined for Coxton.

The dispatcher had to decide whether to let FFW-1 run west from Towanda to Athens via the eastbound main or have it wait for BNE-2's arrival. The latter was one of the highest priority freight trains, carrying cars for delivery to destinations on several connecting regional railroads at Coxton, Lehighton, and Bethlehem. The LV had competition from the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western and Erie for much of this traffic. BNE-2 was scheduled to arrive at Oak Island Yard in Jersey City at noon.

The answer came soon when he instructed the Towanda agent-telegrapher to inform the FFW-1 crew they'd be waiting there for BNE-2. Then it was time for my lunch.

It was well after 3:30 a.m. when the yard office called to report BNE-2 was on its way down the eastbound leader. I noti-



One of the railroad's passenger-hauling Pacifics takes on coal from the facility at Sayre. These 4-6-2s were typically on the point of LV's premier passenger train, the *Black Diamond*. David Marcham

A westbound freight, led by R-1 2-10-2 No. 4053 rolls into Coxton Yard off the Mountain Cutoff. The diverging tracks to the right are the more direct line to Wilkes-Barre. Coxton was a crew change point and helper locomotive base. W. R. Osborne

This view is looking railroad west at Athens Tower. Along the track at left is the equipment connecting the tower to the signal bridge. Main Street is in the foreground. Robert Archer

A BUSY OVERNIGHT AT ATHENS, PA.

~ indicates approximately.

9:35 p.m.	Arrival for duty
11:57 p.m.	No. 4 *Star* departs Sayre EB
12:00 a.m.	No. 4 *Star* OS Athens EB
12:05 a.m.	No. 7 *Maple Leaf* departs Coxton WB
~12:15 a.m.	Extra departs Coxton WB
12:26 a.m.	No. 7 *Maple Leaf* OS Tunkhannock WB
12:44 a.m.	No. 7 *Maple Leaf* heard at Laceyville WB
12:45 a.m.	Extra OS Tunkhannock WB
1:10 a.m.	Extra heard at Laceyville WB
1:30 a.m.	FFW-1 departs Coxton WB
1:32 a.m.	No. 7 *Maple Leaf* OS Athens WB
1:56 a.m.	No. 8 *Maple Leaf* OS Athens EB
2:05 a.m.	Extra OS Towanda WB
2:10 a.m.	FFW-1 heard at Laceyville WB
2:45 a.m.	Wilkes-Barre dispatcher inquires to Athens about WB Extra. Extra engineer calls Athens shortly after and explains hotbox and crew issues. Train stopped at Milan on westbound main.
~3:00 a.m.	Dispatcher instructs Towanda to stop FFW-1; requests relief crew and locomotive from Sayre
~3:45 a.m.	BNE-2 OS Athens EB
~4:30 a.m.	Relief engine from Sayre OS Athens, EB on WB main
~4:30 a.m.	BNE-2 OS Towanda EB
~4:45 a.m	FFW-1 backs across crossover at Towanda to EB main
~5:00 a.m.	FFW-1 departs Towanda WB on EB main
~5:15 a.m.	Extra departs Milan WB with relief engine and crew
~5:30 a.m.	FFW-1 OS Athens, moves from EB to WB main; Extra OS Athens, moves from WB main to WB Sayre yard leader; relief towerman arrives
~5:40 a.m.	Author walks to Sayre station to catch No. 11 *Star* to Ithaca

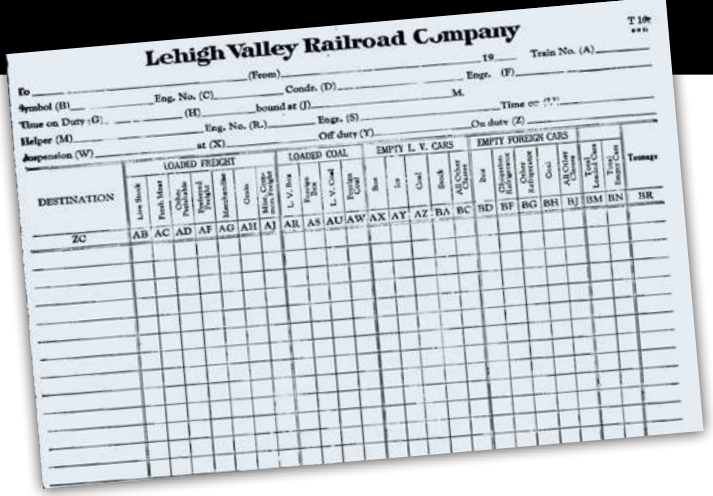
LV 4-6-2 No. 2024 rolls a freight into Sayre Yard in the late 1940s. Situated in the middle of the system, it was one of the busiest spots on the 450-mile main line. H. D. Runey

fied the Wilkes-Barre dispatcher of BNE-2's departure from Sayre. He instructed me to prepare a Clearance Card Form C authorizing BNE-2 to leave Athens and to indicate there were no orders for the train. After completing the Clearance Card, I attached them to the strings on the train-order hoops.

Once the hoops were ready, I unlocked, reversed, and relocked the crossover and eastbound leader switch then cleared the eastbound leader home signal. Then I lowered the gates after the locomotive's headlight appeared, held the hoop out the window and down far enough for the engine crew to grab their card, and lowered the basket and hoop. Almost simultaneously I observed the train for defects, gave a highball signal to the rear-end crew, raised the gates after the caboose passed, restored the eastbound leader signal lever to normal, unlocked the switches, restored them to normal positions, and relocked them.

Next came retrieving the train summary and notifying the dispatcher of its departure and consist, plus notifying Towanda of the train's leaving. Finally, I contacted the Coxton yard office by telephone via the Sayre yard office, LV trunk line, and Coxton local line and dictated the train consist details to the yard telegrapher. This information would be used by the yardmaster to prepare for switching BNE-2 upon its arrival.

Sayre yard office called to report that an eastbound extra freight was coming down the eastbound leader and the relief


Lehigh Valley Railroad Company

Trainmen used a consist sheet to detail the cars in their train: what kind, how many, and where they were going. David Marcham collection

engine was coming east on the westbound leader. Upon notifying him of these moves, the dispatcher dictated a Form 19 train order addressed to the relief crew and myself granting the relief conductor and engineer "right over opposing trains on number one track from Athens Tower to Milan." I repeated the order to the dispatcher and he authorized me to prepare a clearance card with the train order.

My next move was to unlock, reverse, and relock the westbound leader switch and clear the eastbound leader signal. I waited for the engine - another aging 2-8-2, lowered the gates, went downstairs, crossed the eastbound main and delivered the clearance cards and train order to the crew. The engine left about 4:30 a.m. I reported its departure to the dispatcher.

About the same time, Towanda reported the passing of BNE-2. The dispatcher instructed the Towanda operator to have FFW-1 back over the crossover to the eastbound main track. Next, he called Towanda and myself and dictated a train order to FFW-1's crew giving them authority to operate westbound on number two track from Towanda to Athens. We both repeated and completed the order and Towanda prepared a clearance card for the westbound train's crew. The final step was for me to block the eastbound signal levers as a safety precaution in accordance with the *Book of Rules*.

Thirty minutes later, Towanda reported departure of FFW-1 on the eastbound main. About 5:15, the Towanda block line rang and the relief crew conductor reported they were leaving Milan with the extra west. I notified the train dispatcher and called the yard office to report on both consists.

With both westbound trains approaching, I reversed the crossover and the westbound leader switches. Once the trains occupied their approach circuits, I cleared their respective signals and lowered the crossing gates. FFW-1 would cross over from the eastbound to westbound main tracks and the extra would move from the westbound main to the westbound leader.

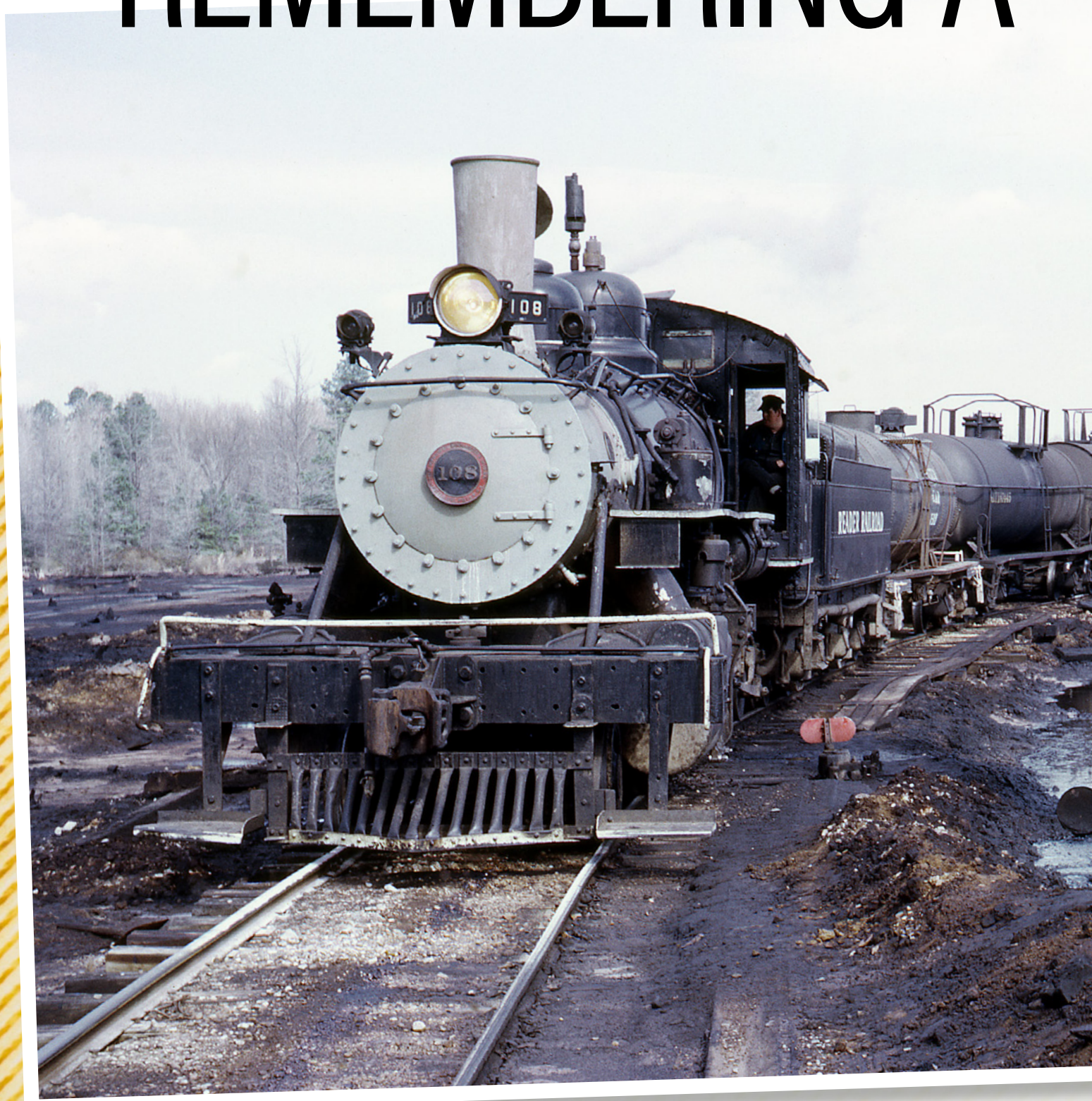
Both appeared about 5:30 a.m. and almost simultaneously the first-trick towerman arrived for work. He'd come early to accommodate my plan to leave Sayre on Train 11, scheduled to depart at 6:15 a.m. After briefing him on the situation, I picked up my suitcase and began a walk to Sayre station.

Safely on board the *Star*, I headed home to Ithaca for rest. In 17 hours, I'd be climbing the Cortland Junction, N.Y. tower steps to prepare for another vacation relief assignment.

The author caught this freight waiting for a signal on the Sayre Yard lead. The 4-8-4 has its work cut out for it. David Marcham

A towerman watches the progress of a train through the Athens Tower interlocking plant on a lighted occupancy board out of the camera's view. He'll pull the electrically actuated pistol-grip levers to give the consist the proper routing. Robert Archer

REMEMBERING A



notebook © Weerapat Wattanapichayakul | Dreamstime.com

Razorback Country RAMBLE

Visiting 16 Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi short lines on a 1972 trip

BY THOMAS LAWSON JR. // Photos by the author

Weather conditions had improved significantly and sunshine was peeking through by the time Reader No. 108 was photographed switching its primary customer, an oil refinery, at Waterloo, Ark.

Bright and early Wednesday, February 9, 1972, my dad, T. R. Lawson Sr., and I departed Birmingham, Ala., heading west. We were off to visit, photograph, and even ride short line and industrial railroads in Arkansas. This was our second extended railfan adventure; we had toured West Virginia and the southern Appalachians for a week in 1960.

Other than my home state of Alabama, there was none in which I ever spent more time researching and photographing my favored "little" railroads than Arkansas. This trip would be my sixth one there since 1958. My last visit was 2009.

The big difference with the '72 adventure is it was my first time taking 35mm color slides! Up until then I had exclusively been a shooter of black-and-white negatives in 616 and postcard 122 film sizes.

After an hour's drive to Tuscaloosa, we turned on to U.S. Highway 82 which would be our primary route until the late the next day. We had barely moved on the road before we took a 10-mile detour to see the Mobile & Gulf Railroad at Brownville, Ala.

I had been a frequent visitor to it from 1955 until its last steam train run with Mogul No. 97 on August 22, 1970. The rare center-cab GE 70-ton model that dieselized the M&G was on hand for that last steam run, marked with only a "2" on the side of its cab. This 1972 visit would be the only time I would ever see the locomotive fully decked out in M&G lettering and numbered 98.

The next stop in Columbus, Miss., yielded some dramatic surprises at the roundhouse of the Columbus & Greenville Ry. Finding a couple of Southern

The first locomotive at which I aimed a 35mm camera was Mobile & Gulf's odd center-cab GE 70-ton. This Feb. 9, 1972, visit to Brownville, Ala., would be the only time I ever saw No. 98 fully lettered for the railroad.

Columbus & Greenville's classic and long-stored 4-6-0 No. 178. The gentlemen near the front of the engine were inspecting damage to the SD28 parked a few feet to the left of the Ten Wheeler.

SD28 No. 702 appeared to have been the most damaged from having been unexpectedly parked in a ditch a day or so earlier.

Baldwin's first model DRS6-4-1500 locomotive, in the form of C&G No. 601, was being readied for a run.

Railway units parked next to the short line's forever-stored old Rogers Ten-wheeler No. 178 was no big deal. The bigger road's power normally tied-up in the C&G yard after completing its run on the branch line from Parrish, Ala., to Columbus.

But to also find the C&G's two SD28s parked in this same area and almost coupled to the front of the 4-6-0 was quite unexpected and very exciting!

The SDs, Nos. 701 and 702, had been inbound to Columbus with a freight train a day or so earlier when they hit a truck at a crossing far west of town. They ended up in the ditch next to the C&G's track.

The damaged units had been ushered into the Columbus yard only shortly before on that Wednesday morning. C&G brass and roundhouse workers were just beginning to assess the damage to the two EMDs when we arrived. Repairs were obviously going to be needed to the end sheets, handrails, footboards, and steps of the two locomotives.

On the other side of the roundhouse, C&G's Baldwin DRS-6-4-1500s No. 601 (the first of this model produced) and twin 605 were being readied to go back to the wreck site and retrieve the long-overdue freight train stranded somewhere out in the boondocks of central Mississippi.

Dad and I soon departed the scene, leaving the C&G personnel to contemplate their current motive power crisis.

Continuing westward on U.S. 82, we checked the C&G yard at Greenwood that afternoon where we found 65-ton Whitcomb No. 42 to be the local switcher. Not far away, resting on the house track at C&G's marvelous old wooden station, were Baldwin Nos. 603 and 604 awaiting their next call.

Light was fading almost two hours later when we crossed the big bridge over the Mississippi River at Greenville and pulled in for the night at a new motel in the quaint little Arkansas town of Lake Village. We were now in "Razorback Country," so named for the mascot of the University of Arkansas.

Arkansas awaits

Departing Lake Village before daybreak, we began an hour's drive to Crossett, our first planned stop. With the hazy sun, we decided it was too early for photography and had a hearty breakfast at an establishment in the shadows of the monstrous Georgia-Pacific plant there.

The pause allowed the lighting to improve and photography around the Ashley, Drew & Northern's nearby engine facility to become a lot more favorable.

A panorama of motive power situated along the southeast side of the C&G roundhouse at Columbus included the shortline's AS416 No. 606, a Southern Geep riding on Alco trucks, both of C&G's damaged SD28's, and ancient Rogers-built Ten-wheeler No. 178 at the far end.

No. 42 was one of a pair of 65-ton Whitcombs owned by the C&G. It was idling with its original Buda diesel engines at Greenwood, Miss., in the afternoon of Feb. 9, 1972.

Resting on the house track at the C&G's wonderful old wooden station at Greenwood that same afternoon were the road's DRS6-4-1500s, Nos. 603 and 604.

Not in evidence around the AD&N's shop was the road's SW900 No. 102. An inquiry to a friendly hostler who was putting together the line's power for the day revealed 102 was already at work in a yard at the north end of the sprawling G-P facility. He was kind enough to give us directions to it.

The SW900 was visible down in the bowels of the plant upon our arrival. However, the conductor on the switching job was waiting at a switch for the locomotive. I introduced myself, told him I'm from Alabama, a railfan wanting to take a picture of the 102 … and so on.

He said the engine would come out shortly by itself and he'd give me a minute to photograph it while he lined the switch for a reverse move back into the plant.

Being a dedicated black-and-white locomotive portrait photographer, I used my Kodak Monitor camera initially upon the SW900's arrival at the targeted switch. When I put the 616 camera down, the conductor must have thought I was done and immediately the engine backed into the plant before I could even get my 35mm out of the camera bag! I was disappointed but having the 616 portrait was nice.

We took off west, and after crossing the Ouachita River, Dad and I turned south off U.S. 82 and made the short trip down a backwoods county road to the sawmill town of Huttig. Louisiana & Pine Bluff No. 35, a side-rod General Electric 45-ton, was immediately sighted in a nice spot. It was promptly photographed both in black-and-white and color. Nearby was the

Louisiana & Pine Bluff Railway No. 35, a 45-ton GE, is shown switching the sawmill at Huttig, Ark.

A quick stop at El Dorado found El Dorado & Wesson Railway Alco S1 switcher No. 19 parked in front of the short line's office.

two-stall, sheet-metal enginehouse of the L&PB. Sitting outside was the short line's spare engine, Arkansas & Louisiana Missouri 44-ton GE No. 34. I took an "artsy" color slide shot of the 34 framed through the doorway of an empty stall. It was only later, back on U.S. 82 towards El Dorado, that it dawned on me I had only taken 616 black-and-white shots of A&LM 34. I'd forgotten to use the 35mm camera on it!

A quick check at El Dorado found El Dorado & Wesson No. 19, an ex-Rockdale, Sandow & Southern Alco S1, in a nice spot right in front of the line's office. Snuggled comfortably in the E&W's nearby two-stall enginehouse was the railroad's Alco S3 No. 18. Not being able to photograph the latter at that time was no great disappointment as I "nailed it" on my next trip to Arkansas the following year.

At Texarkana on the afternoon of Thursday, Feb. 10, Dad and I finally bid goodbye to U.S. 82 and turned north toward Ashdown. The last location visit for the day was a 20-mile detour west from Ashdown to Arkansas Cement Corp.'s operation at Foreman. The plant had received an Alco RS3 a year earlier from my hometown Birmingham Southern and I had great hopes of finding it repainted in the ACC's paint scheme. Alas, the unit was only then being sanded down and prepped for the paint job.

The relatively big Alco was still showing most of its original Birmingham Southern No. 152 markings. Light conditions had deteriorated by the time we reached there, so I only took a slide of the engine "just for the record."

Nearby was Arkansas Cement's other locomotive, an NW2, also ex-Birmingham Southern, which I shot both in color and black-and-white. However, I no longer have any images of that portrait session with the No. 22. Five years later, on my ninth railfan tour of Arkansas, I shot the NW2 in perfect lighting conditions and those views replaced my 1972 images of the engine. And, yes, the RS3 had received its blue-and-cream paint job by then, but it was now completely devoid of any markings.

From Foreman, we drove due north on a backwoods state road and soon settled in for the night at DeQueen.

Pressing on

Weather conditions there on the morning of Friday, Feb. 11 were abysmal. A front was invading Arkansas and it appeared to be positioned at that moment right over DeQueen! We tried the technique from the day before, having a good breakfast before checking out whatever DeQueen & Eastern motive power was on hand. Unfortunately, this time the lighting conditions didn't improve at all.

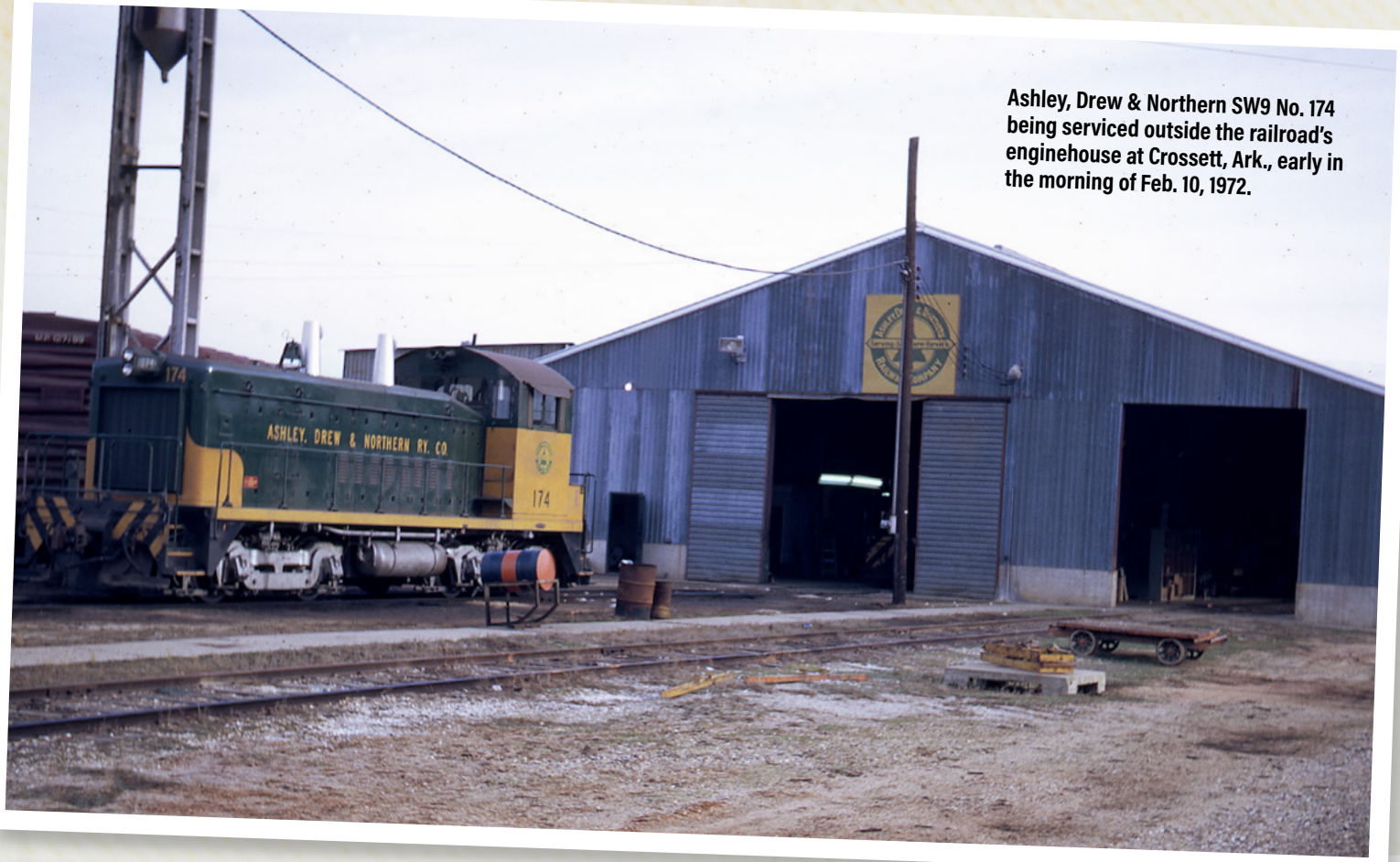
Over at the D&E's covered running inspection track, we found two Geeps, Nos. D-6 and D-7, and SW900 D-4 at idle waiting on their day's assignments. When the images taken there were developed, I was surprised to see how the Kodachrome slide film had compensated for the awful lighting conditions. The black-and-white 616 negatives, however, were very thin in contrast.

A couple of miles southwest of DeQueen, Dierks Forests, Inc. had a large wood-preserving facility at a spot named Process City. Checking in there, we found DFI 65-ton Whitcomb No. D-1 hard at work switching the cylindrical pressure-treating retorts at the plant. Though the D-1 was an identical twin to C&G No. 42 we had photographed a couple of days earlier, the D-1 had been re-engined with a pair of Caterpillar prime movers while the C&G Whitcomb was still running its original Buda diesel power.

During the hour's drive from DeQueen southward to a wide spot in the road called Wilton, weather conditions improved considerably. The Braswell Sand & Gravel Co. washer was plainly visible on the east side of U.S. Highway 71 there. There was no mistaking the owner of its Alco as the name "Braswell" was displayed in huge red letters along the white hood of the S3.

The unit carried no road number by then, but I had photographed the very same locomotive eight years earlier in Florida working for its original owner, marked Davison Chemical Co. 101.

Listening to the Braswell switcher work, it quickly became apparent there was a significant "spit" in the firing order sound of its 539 Alco prime mover. A quick look, with permission, under the hood of the S3 revealed that the gasket under the No. 3 cylinder head had partially blown out. The result was a spray of water being ejected from underneath that cylinder head each time it fired with the spray potentially raining down on the fuel injection pumps below it.



Ashley, Drew & Northern SW9 No. 174 being serviced outside the railroad's enginehouse at Crossett, Ark., early in the morning of Feb. 10, 1972.

With the No. 174 finally attached, the AD&N's road set of an SW9, SW1200, and SW1500 No. 150 is ready for the day's run.

As the fuel pumps were lubricated by the diesel passing through them, it was not good to have a constant spray of water falling onto them. However, a bit of rural Arkansas ingenuity had solved part of the problem. A railroad tie plate had been securely wedged vertically between the No. 2 and No. 3 cylinder heads at such an angle that the water rolled harmlessly off the right side of the Alco's engine block!

I was impressed.

It was only six miles from Wilton to downtown Ashdown where we found Graysonia, Nashville & Ashdown No. 55 resting in front of the town's impressive depot. The Alco S4 had already completed its interchange with the Rock Island, but it was now waiting on the Kansas City Southern local to show up. The sun was shining brightly on the Alco in a great spot for photography, so I worked it over pretty thoroughly.

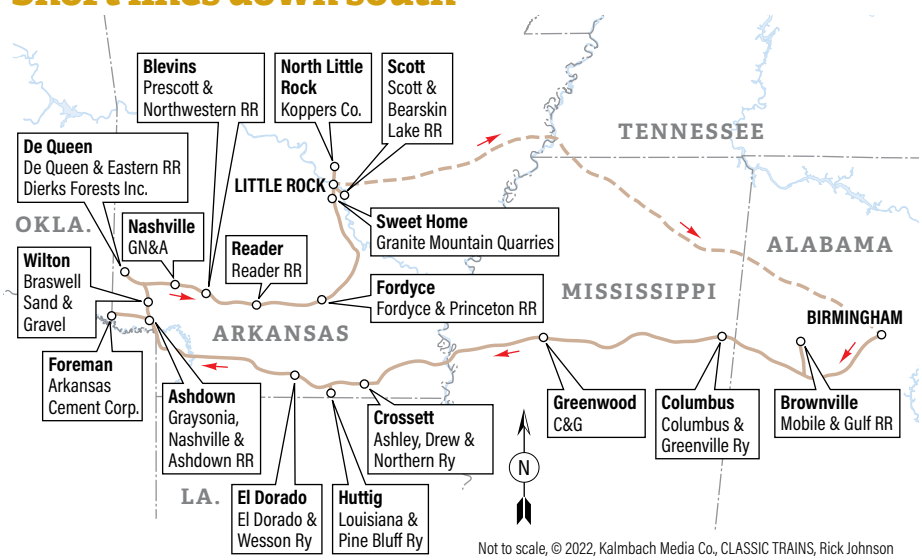
I decided to ask the GN&A train crew if their extra locomotive, Alco S3 No. 51, might be available for camera work at the short line's terminal in Nashville, Ark. One fellow quickly replied: "It's your lucky day!" The 51 had been moved outside that morning to have its trucks cleaned at the request of the local Federal Railroad Administration locomotive inspector. It was in a wide-open spot and would be until the train crew got back to Nashville to shove it back into its stall.

The backwoods roads between Ashdown and Nashville were several miles longer than the GN&A's more direct 27-mile rail route, but we found the little Alco as advertised. The problem

The last stop in the late afternoon of Feb. 10 was the Arkansas Cement Corp. at Foreman. Its RS3, received from the Birmingham Southern almost a year earlier, was only now being prepared for repainting into the company's color scheme.

The spare engine at Huttig was Arkansas & Louisiana Missouri GE 44-ton No. 34. It is framed through the doorway of the enginehouse.

Short lines down south



Dismal overcast weather at DeQueen, Ark., on the morning of Feb. 11 found D&E's GP40 No. D-7, SW900 No. D-4, and GP35 No. D-6 at the road's running inspection shed awaiting the day's work assignment.

A couple of miles southwest of DeQueen, Dierks Forests had a large wood preserving plant at Process City. The resident switcher there in 1972 was ex-U.S. Army 65-ton Whitcomb No. D-1.

was the sun was directly on the nose of the unit with no hint of lighting down either side of its hood. I took a couple of 616 shots of it just to be safe but didn't bother to record the scene on the more expensive Kodachrome.

Departing Nashville, the storm we had first encountered that morning in DeQueen soon caught up with us as we were making the 35-mile drive to spend the night at Prescott. Totally by surprise, we came upon a Prescott & Northwestern train at Blevins, led by 70-ton GE No. 25, which was also headed to Prescott. The skies were dark and ominous, but I took a slide anyway of the train passing through downtown Blevins. The scene was barely out of view behind us when the first raindrops hit the windshield of my wife's '68 Malibu Super Sport, which I had commandeered for this Razorback Railfan Ramble.

A ride on the Reader

Heavy rains cleared the Prescott area overnight. But Saturday morning found heavy low-hanging clouds in place and a brisk wind blowing out of the northwest. Along with the remaining dampness in the air, it was going to be an uncomfortable day riding the Reader Railroad's steam-powered mixed train.

Reader was an easy 20-mile jaunt from Prescott. On previous visits to it in 1964 and '67, I had obtained nearly perfect large-format roster shots of the line's 2-6-2 No. 11 and 2-8-0 No. 1702, respectively. This day would complete my trifecta of photos of its motive power as 2-6-2 No. 108 was being used.

Despite the poor lighting conditions, I took several 35mm slides of 108 assembling its train. Then Dad and I, along with a very small group of other paying customers, boarded the passenger car for the leisurely 23-mile ride down to Waterloo. Mr. Tom Long, the president of the Reader line, was also the conductor on this train. He and Dad, easily being the two most senior members aboard the coach, soon began conversations that continued at random moments all the way to Waterloo. At some point into the trip, Dad half-jokingly asked Mr. Long: "Is our train on time?" Mr. Long rather boisterously replied: "Sir, our trains are *never* on time!" Shortline witticism at its best.

The skies had cleared considerably by the time our train stopped just north of Waterloo for the 108 to switch the Reader's primary traffic source, a small and obviously old oil refinery. Just a thin haze covered the sun and by the time we had our

There was no mistaking the owner of the boldly painted, but unnumbered Alco S3 located at the pit of Braswell Sand & Gravel Co. at Wilton. It ran thanks to a little backwoods ingenuity.

lunch break at Waterloo and the 108 with its auxiliary water car turned on the wye there, the sky was bright blue.

I enjoyed a cab ride for much of the trip back to Reader. After putting its train and passenger coach away, No. 108 made a last-minute switching move which I witnessed only this one time in all my years of railfanning. No. 1702 was in the shop and suddenly just the 2-8-0's tender was coupled to the pilot of the 108 as the tender was being set over clear of the cab end of the 1702. Slides were exposed of that scene!

The hits keep coming

Sunday, Feb. 13 dawned gorgeous. After partaking of our last Arkansas breakfast, Dad and I started north on the 30-mile drive to Fordyce. I'd read somewhere that Fordyce & Princeton had recently received the S3 that was previously the No. 101 on the Oregon, Pacific & Eastern. From an earlier 1967 visit to the F&P, I knew the line had an enginehouse, but I had my fingers crossed that this weekend they might have left the Alco outside. Sure enough, it was in an open spot clear of the enginehouse.

Braswell's Alco S3 was switching out the loads at the company's gravel washer at Wilton. I'd shot this unit under previous ownership.

Late in the morning of Feb. 11 Graysonia, Nashville & Ashdown S4 No. 55 was found in perfect light resting at the station in Ashdown. The GN&A crew was awaiting the arrival of the daily KCS local.

The last shot on the 11th was an unexpected encounter with Prescott & Northwestern 70- ton No. 25 homebound with its train at Blevins, Ark. The weather was just awful and a cold rain set in moments later.

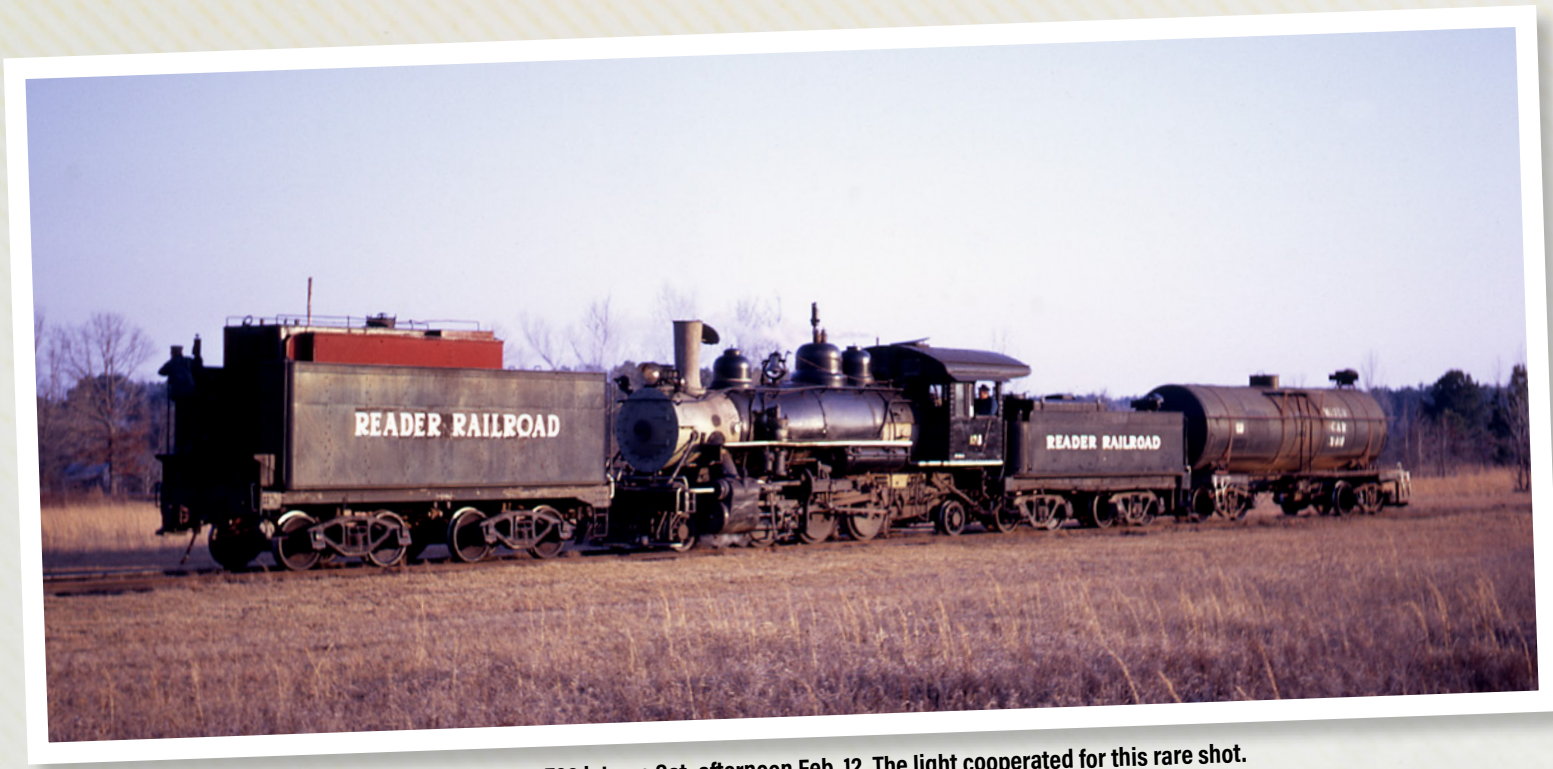
Reader Railroad 2-6-2 No. 108 putting its mixed train together on the morning of Feb. 12, 1972, in miserably cold and misting weather conditions at Reader.

T. R. Lawson Sr., posing in the fireman's window of Prairie No. 108 during the lunch stopover at Waterloo.

Though somewhat backlit, I got some tight 616 portrait shots of it. The 35mm never made it out of the camera bag.

I most regret now that I didn't at least take a shot of the minimally improvised fresh "F&P" lettering on the S3's cab. Of the original OP&E lettering, the "O" had simply been painted out. The reverse loop in the upper right corner of the "P" had been painted over and now formed the letter "F". The loop removed from the "P" had now been added to the top of the "E" and with the bottom leg of the "E" painted out, you now had a "P". The first two digits in the old OP&E road number were painted over, all of which now formed "F&P 1."

It was a lengthy drive from Fordyce to a few locations I wanted to check on the eastern outskirts of Little Rock. The last use of the 35mm camera this trip was at Sweet Home where Granite Mountain Quarries 1942-built SW1 was in residence. The unit was painted battleship gray with its only markings a strange "W 109" number painted on its cab. But most interesting was the fact that the top section of the hood over the locomotive's exhaust manifold and main generator was nowhere in sight! The



Reader 108 switching the tender from 2-8-0 No. 1702 late on Sat. afternoon Feb. 12. The light cooperated for this rare shot.

little EMC product was obviously still being used, but with no one around to ask, I have no idea what was going on here.

A brief mid-day visit to Koppers Co.'s large tie-treating plant in North Little Rock revealed faded, weathered paint on their rare drop-cab, Caterpillar-powered, four traction-motored GE 45-ton. Obstructions prevented the machine from being photographed on the sunny end, but I took a black-and-white shot of it anyway facing into the sun from the open end. This location was plainly a late afternoon shot which I would get two years later for the first time in color as well as again in black-and-white, which replaced the 1972 effort.

For our very last stop in Arkansas, it was just a short drive to the little town of Scott where a tourist railroad was in its infancy. The rolling stock of the planned Scott & Bearskin Lake Railroad appeared to be entirely equipment from the W. T. Carter Estate at Camden, Texas. The two locomotives were wood-burning Baldwin 2-6-0 No. 1 and oil-burning Alco-Cooke 2-6-0 No. 201. The 201 was at the front and was still fully lettered as MC&SA No. 201 for the Moscow, Camden & San Augustine.

The sun angle on the former Panama Mogul was superb and its side rods were at absolute dead-bottom quarter just like in a builder's photo. This called for my trusty ancient Kodak Autographic 3A postcard camera to make a rare appearance atop my tripod. The three perfect portrait shots of the 201 finished up that six-shot roll of 122 film which had been started the previous afternoon at Reader. The 35mm Mamiya was ignored.

It was a short distance from Scott to Interstate 40 where we began the two-hour drive to Memphis and then a four-hour trip down U.S. 78 to Birmingham. We arrived back home well after dark, but our five-day excursion had netted encounters with a whopping 16 different short lines and industrial railroads in three states with Dad watching me photograph twice that number of locomotives.

Dad passed away quite unexpectedly barely more than a year later. He was only 64. But my wonderful memories of him accompanying me on that Arkansas excursion are still strong and very much cherished. ■

Why Granite Mountain Quarries' SW1 No. W109 was apparently operating with a missing top hood section covering its exhaust manifold and main generator would have been an interesting mystery to solve. But on a Sunday morning at Sweet Home, Ark., there was no one around to ask!

Little Joe E-20 prepares to leave Avery, Idaho, eastbound with a train. Noel Holley collection

The runaway train that didn't

Snowplow duty on the electrifed Milwaukee was dangerous — but it could have been worse

In 1949, I was working out of the small town of Avery, Idaho, on the Milwaukee Road. The railroad crossed the Bitterroot Mountains on a 1.7% grade through St. Paul Pass. The grade began just east of the Avery depot.

Avery was a crew-change, engine-change, and a helper terminal. There, steam engines were taken off trains and replaced with electrics. In the winter, Avery was also the base for the rotary snowplows operating between there and St. Regis, Mont.

Our work outfit had a 2-6-6-2 Mallet and we were called to push a steam rotary over the pass. A snow slide at Falcon had blocked the tracks and tore down the overhead trolley wires. Our rotary crew had cleared the passing track at Falcon, then we went to work on our other assignments for the day.

When we got to East Portal, we plowed out the sidings and had a meet with a westbound freight train. On the head end was GE-750, the first "Little Joe," as these streamlined motors of 1950 were known. At this point it was still a demonstrator locomotive on loan from General Electric.

A conventional three-unit GE freight motor was running as a mid-train helper. Since the wire at Falcon was now buried in a pile of snow, the train would have to go through there with the pantographs down. With the trolley overhead gone, there were no working air compressors on the train as there was no source of electricity to run them.

This meant there would be no regenerative braking and the crew would have to handle train braking using only the compressed air in the system. Additionally, there was no way to release the train brakes once they were set.

As the train rolled through the gap in the trolley overhead, the brakes crept on more and more, threatening to stop the moving train. With no compressors the crew had no way to kick off the air brakes to keep the train moving through the gap. Eventually the train stalled with both electric engines sitting in the section that had no electricity.

The temperature was about zero or maybe 10 degrees below where our rotary and the Mallet were working. We were on the Montana side of the mountain,

Mallet No. 64 rests at Tacoma, Wash., ready to move freight east. Albert Farrow, Noel Holley collection

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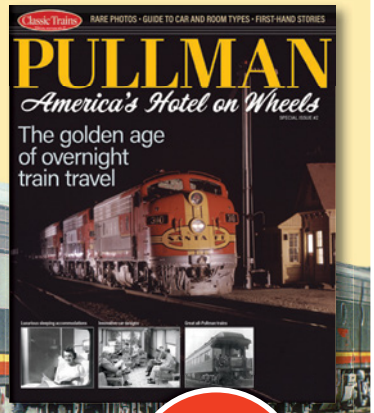

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A Milwaukee Road steam rotary snowplow throws snow off the right-of-way in Montana's Bitterroot Mountains. W. H. Edwards, Noel Holey collection

clearing out passing tracks at 1 or 2 in the morning. When the dispatcher finally got hold of us, he ordered us to back our work outfit over St. Paul Pass and couple it to the freight to get it moving.

The air in the braking system on the freight had leaked off after two to three hours on a cold night in the mountains. We backed onto the it and coupled up the air from our 2-6-6-2. Then the old-time hoghead on the Mallet released the brakes and started pumping air into the train, but the air from the steam engine was too little and too late.

As soon as the brakes released, away went the train, and us with it.

I was in the rotary and the air gauge said 15 pounds in the train line. I knew that once the train started moving, we wouldn't have enough brakes to stop it. We had a quarter of a mile to go to get our lead engine, the Little Joe, back under the trolley wire.

We should have pumped up the brakes for 30 to 45 minutes to recharge the entire train. As we started rattling down through the passing track, I decided that if it hadn't slowed down enough by the time the rotary got to the west switch, I was going to jump.

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The GE-750 is a 5,000 hp electric locomotive demonstrator seen on the Milwaukee Road at Renton, Wash., in 1949. Noel Holley collection

While I was considering my escape, I felt the slack run in. This meant the Little Joe was back under the wire. The engineer had his pantograph up and put the Joe into regeneration. He was starting to check his speed a little.

Next thing I know, I felt the slack run in again. That meant the helper was under the wire and into regeneration, too.

We were moving way above what we should have been traveling — neither of these engines regenerated well at high speed. They just didn't have the holding power and we were going pretty fast. But the air was coming up slowly.

They held the speed in check with regeneration until they had the air built up in the train. Then we went on down the mountain. If either of these engines had kicked out of electrical braking, we would have been goners.

There were 14 men on that train, seven on the train crew and the rest on the work outfit. The conductor and the brakeman didn't realize the danger and I didn't tell them.

The old hoghead could have held the freight train just by setting the brakes on the Mallet before releasing the train brakes. He just didn't do it.

The lead engineer and the helper engineer knew about the danger, but there was nothing they could do about it. They didn't have any control until they got under the wire. That was their only chance on the 1.7% grade.

They had been making test runs on the Milwaukee with the GE-750. It would regenerate at a higher speed and

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had better holding power than the older GEs. The older GEs had been built in 1915 and 1916. It was difficult to get them into regeneration at speed. Here was the danger: If we hadn't had an experienced helper engineer, he would never have gotten into regeneration while going 30 mph. That was their maximum speed.

The older GEs were galloping right along at 30 mph. Between the two engineers they successfully kept notching back on the regeneration to get the speed down and get the train fully under control. The skill of the crew got all 14 men, three locomotives, and a rotary snowplow home safely.

General Electric built 20 of the 5,000-horsepower GE-750s for the Soviet Union, which was one of America's allies in World War II. However, due to later Cold War restrictions, The manufacturer was unable to deliver the locomotives and the Soviets did not pay for them.

The GE-750 proved to be a good locomotive at a bargain price, but the Milwaukee did not immediately buy any. GE offered to sell the 20 locomotives and spare parts for $1 million. This price reflected their value as scrap metal.

The Milwaukee had already decided to dieselize and rejected the offer of new electric locomotives.

With the advent of the Korean War, however, rail traffic increased. The railroads needed locomotives faster than manufacturers could make them.

The Milwaukee offered to buy the GE-750s. By this time, though, some had already been sold and General Electric was in the negotiating driver's seat. It wanted $l million for the 12 remaining units. The spare parts had already been sold.

The Milwaukee bought the locomotives still available. The GE-750 demonstrator went became number E-70.

An unidentified employee nicknamed these locomotives Little Joes, a reference to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. The big electrics had a rugged and reliable design that allowed them to exceed the performance specifications laid out by GE. Milwaukee Road employees often expressed pride in what these locomotives could do.

The Milwaukee Road shut down its Pacific Extension electric operations in 1974. The entire system would meet its demise in 1980.

GE-750 is currently on display in Deer Lodge, Mont., as Milwaukee Road E-70.

— Bill Lintz, as told to Noel Holley

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Mike Schafer takes us on a tour of the great railroad we lost in 1972.

Budd RDC color photo gallery
Dive into Dave Ingles' photography of this stainless steel branchline passenger savior.

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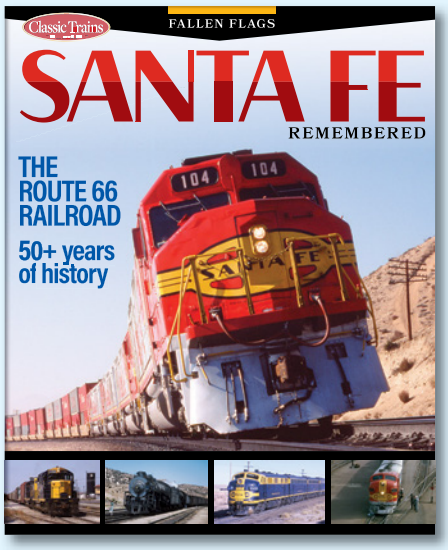

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Classic Trains' new 100-page special issue covers the famed Santa Fe Railway. Learn about this railroading institution from the era's best authors: Wallace W. Abbey, David P. Morgan, Lloyd Stagner, and more!

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P40354

A Streetcar 'Roll-Runner'

Chicago's traffic survey photographer encountered this virtual wall of dark-green, Pullman-built streetcars operating on Milwaukee Avenue at the height of the July 1, 1919, evening rush. The view looks east-southeast with the Chicago & North Western bridge over Grand Avenue off to the left.

Closest to the cameraman, Chicago Surface Lines 1043, a 1911 "Small Pullman" works an Elston-Downtown trip; leading it "Big Pullman" 573 on the Milwaukee Avenue line is crossing the heart of the intersection, while another "Big Pullman", the 373, is clearing the intersection. Traffic lights were still a few years' in Chicago's future — note the policeman between the 1043 and the 573. About 500 officers worked the downtown traffic detail in this era.

At the time, CSL was pumping an average of 300 cars per hour through this intersection each weekday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. So, a dedicated (and quick!) photographer could have burned through 100 rolls of slide film (had it existed) at this location. The title pays homage to slide-trading railfans, who, in the days of heavy swapping, would have shot as much film as they had on a particularly good subject.

Lines passing through the intersection in 1919 included the aforementioned Elston-Downtown and Milwaukee services, as well as Division-Downtown, Grand, Halsted, Milwaukee-Armitage, plus through-routes 6 (State-Milwaukee), 8 (Halsted-63rd), 13 (Halsted-Archer), and 18 (Halsted-Madison).

A total of 21 through-routes were established in the 1907 ordinances allowing the Chicago City Railway and the Chicago Railways to operate the surface transit service in Chicago. Both companies worked quickly to establish as many of the required through-routes as they could, recognizing that some of the specified lines had physical impediments or restrictions to be overcome. Operating experience with the initial routes led to modification of some of the routings and terminals in the July 1912 ordinance.

Those ordinances also provided for the establishment of additional through-routes as warranted by traffic. One of the most-famous of these was the longest-lived; through route 22 was the Clark-Wentworth service, which would survive as a car line until 1957. This line illustrates many of the principles of the through-route service, that it would eliminate wasteful overlap and the routes would avoid congestion by requiring establishment of additional central area terminal facilities.

A final point on the magnitude of the operation presented in this photo — all cars then in service were two-man; one-man cars would not begin in Chicago until 1921.

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New. Modern. But better?

Downtown St. Petersburg, Fla., had a problem in the 1950s: The Seaboard Air Line. Its passenger station was on the street — literally on Second Avenue South — and the trains ran over it and other streets to get there.

Multiple passenger trains including sections of the *Orange Blossom Special* and *Silver Meteor* came and went daily to this Sunshine State tourist mecca. These loaded and emptied on the throughfare, causing traffic headaches with the burgeoning number of cars and other vehicles at the time.

Adding to the crazy mix was rival Atlantic Coast Line's station between Second and Third streets.

Charming, definitely. Convenient? Hardly.

"St. Pete" city fathers, wanting to keep the sources of tourist traffic but also get them out of downtown, put together a relocation package for the Seaboard. The railroad built a new station of moderate size at 415 First Ave. North that opened in 1959.

Shown here on Jan. 20, 1959, the structure is decorated for a festive occasion that we can assume is its grand opening. The modern edifice boasts complete air conditioning, automatic doors, full-length picture windows, colorfully upholstered wrought-iron furniture, decorative interior planters, and a host of other amenities.

It also had a roof over the driveway entrance, handy when those pesky afternoon showers pop up, and similarly a 518-foot canopy over the loading platform equally good at keeping the Florida sun at bay. Perhaps most ambitiously the parking lot had room for 300 cars.

The $650,000 terminal didn't enjoy a long life. Seaboard and ACL merged in 1967; the latter had moved out of downtown to a new station on 31st Street North four years prior. Seaboard Coast Line operations were consolidated there in 1968 and that facility survived into the Amtrak era. Photo: George W. Pettingill

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